

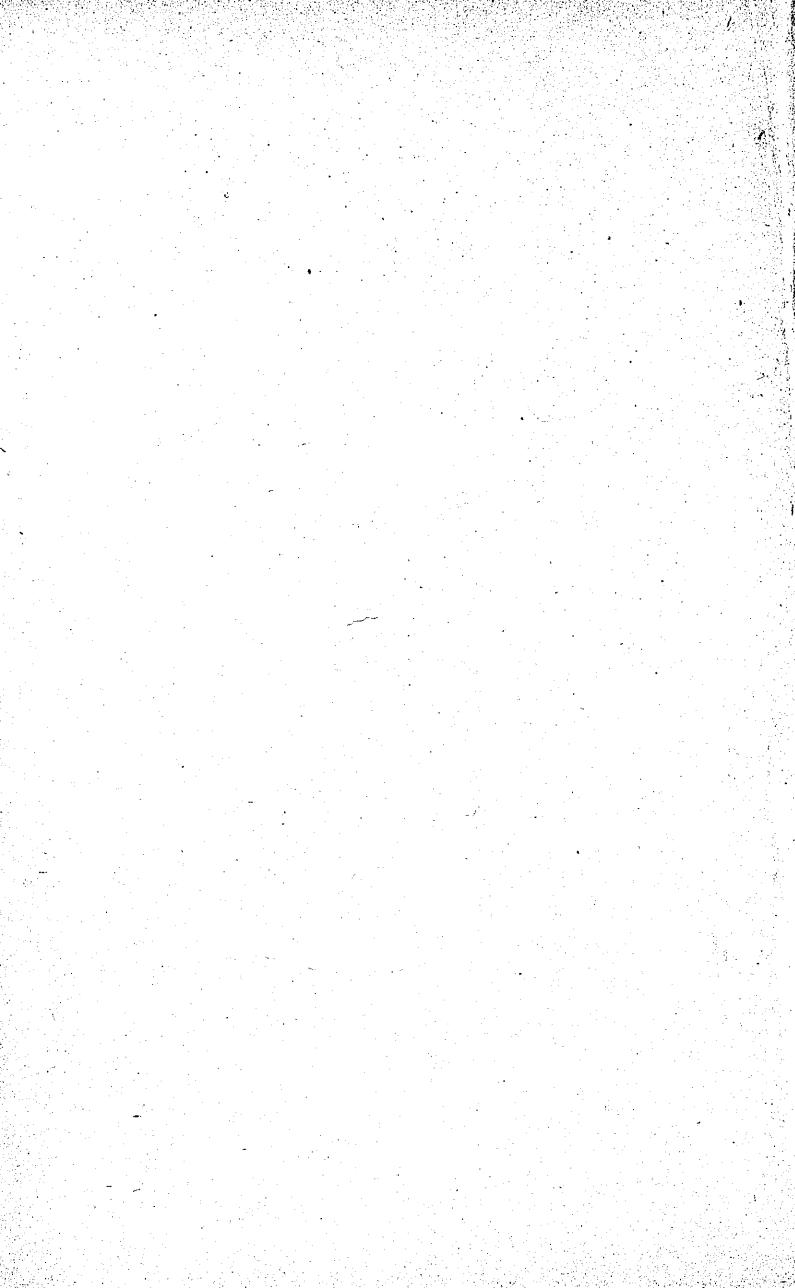
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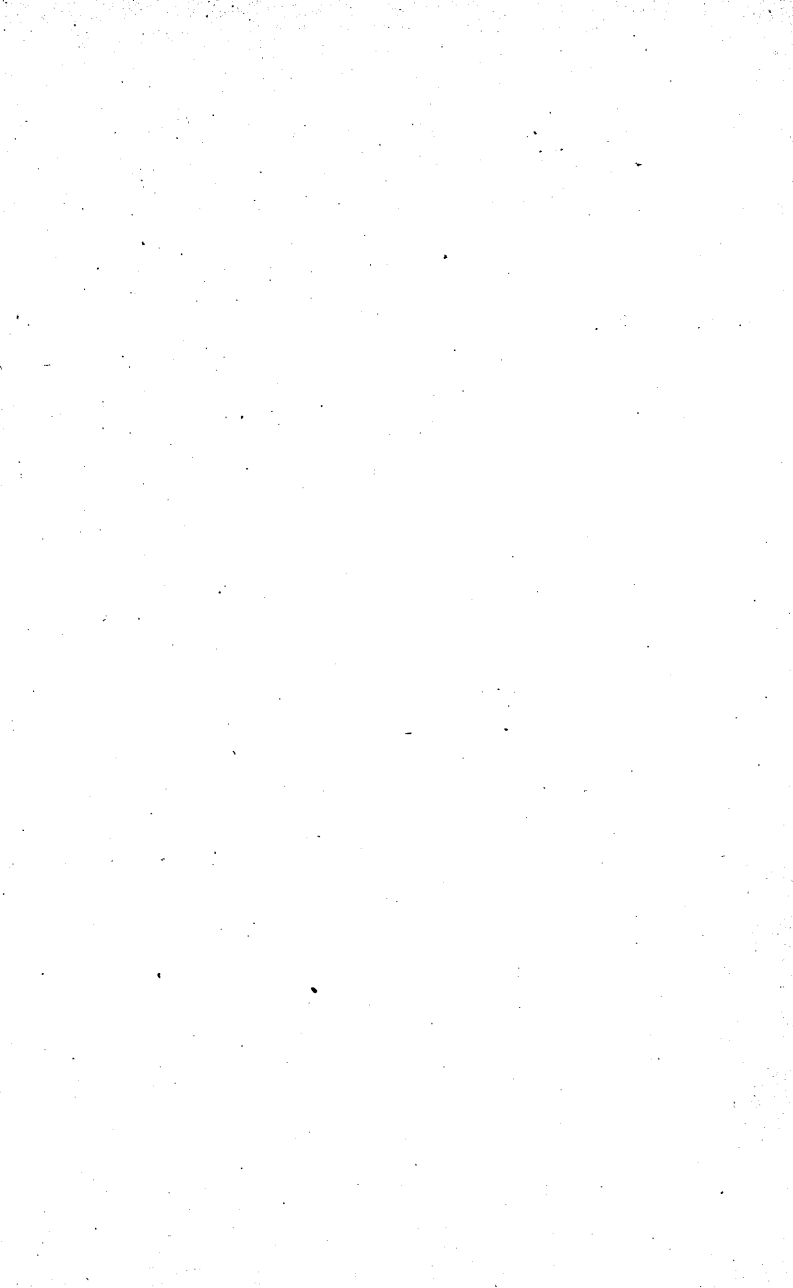
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**THE FIVE PORTRAITS
OF JESUS**

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BY THE

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PREFACE

THIS Essay, in the strictest sense of the word, is an endeavour to outline and interpret the conception of Jesus as it is presented in the New Testament. These Scriptures are accepted as reliable witnesses in their broad testimony, and in the trend of their interpretation of the conception towards an ever-enlarging and more appreciative understanding of His personality.

There is no suggestion, in any reference, that the student of the sources of the Gospels, and the grammarian who looks keenly into every word, have no office to fill and no service to render. The indebtedness of believing men to our modern Biblical scholarship, with its covetable range of knowledge and its scrupulous care for truth, combined so often with an ardent faith, has not been

sufficiently recognised. But, as will be noted in more than one instance, the value of a number of witnesses does not depend on the words they may use, or on the complete identity of their testimony, or even upon their assured understanding of what they saw or experienced. If the broad trend of any testimony is clear, lesser differences plead for the trustworthiness of the evidence.

Much of the modern disquiet in some religious circles, and especially where what is known as Fundamentalism is casting its shadow on devout Christian minds and sundering men who hold one fellowship, is needless. There is an inspiration by the Holy Spirit, but it is an inspiration of the spirit of man, not of the words of a book. As Paul says, with his own power of clear distinction, 'We have this treasure in earthen vessels.' He adds the notable reason 'that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.' It would be pitiful did the truth of God depend on an adjective. And there is also an in-

spiration of selection. Under that inspiration holy men of God not only spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, but they gathered together and accredited these Scriptures of the New Testament as trustworthy witnesses to the faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

As a consequence, the citations from these Scriptures are made as representative of the uncontradicted intent of the whole testimony. For a somewhat similar reason there has been no more than a few passing allusions to the pleadings which so absorbed the minds of believers in the controversies of the early centuries. Still more decisively there has been a refusal to discuss the philosophical positions and to repeat the watchwords which were so eagerly affirmed. The interpretation of the divine personality of Jesus was more clearly defined against the heresies which were condemned. But our modern psychology has made many of their suggested proofs utterly obsolete, and the theological terms drawn from the names of pro-

tagonists in the debates are no longer of any value in the reading of the New Testament documents.

One other remark, with a twofold reference, may be required. One of the reasons why so many of the modern lives of Jesus have failed to justify themselves to Christian men is that they have focussed their attention almost entirely on the Gospels. It is certainly no small service to the faith to be able to exhibit Jesus as men saw Him in the flesh. But the Gospels must be read in the light of the evidence of the Epistles, and these have an added value in that some of them are prior in date. The whole New Testament remains as the securest and best accredited foundation on which to build with confidence both a history of the times of Christ and of His society, and an estimate of the values of His message, and consequently a just portrayal of His personality.

The second reference leads to the affirmation that the interpretation of a

religious personality is conditioned by a belief in a spiritual realm and in a divine Being who is over all. It should not require to be said that only a believer can interpret a faith. The problems of every faith are religious, not metaphysical. Every denial of its validity must justify itself against the history of its origin and the fact of its persistence. The crowning miracle of the Christian faith was its acceptance by a multitude of believers. The consummating evidence of its truth is its ever-widening dominion over all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues.

GLASGOW.

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I

CONCERNING THE PORTRAITURE

‘Many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us.’—LUKE i. 1.

THERE is no authentic likeness of the form or of the lineaments of Jesus. There is not a single allusion in the New Testament to the fashion of His frame or the features of His face. None of the evangelists gives even a passing hint of what men saw as Jesus walked by the way. We are told how He stood, but not of His stature. His looks are distinctively described, but not the colour of His eyes. It is recorded that His face shone in a transfiguring glory and that it was troubled with keen feeling, but there is no suggestion of its outline. The only reference, even to the garments He wore, is to the casting of lots for them at the foot of the Cross.

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The one note of what men saw in His flesh is directed to the print of the nails. We know of the short, thick-necked, grotesque figure of Socrates, and of his Silenus-like profile. We have a description of the garb of John the Baptist, and a note upon his strident and carrying voice. Paul has recorded the fact that his personal appearance was well known throughout the Churches. But Jesus walks by the way, sits in the company of His disciples, stands at Pilate's judgment-seat, and yet there is not a single descriptive line given to His personal appearance.

Art, motivated by its interest in what appeals to the eye and expresses and symbolises the emotions, has endeavoured to supply this lack. Every picture gallery in Christendom has a store of likenesses of Jesus on its walls. In most cases the painters have indulged their own fancies and drawn from some model whose face suggested what Jesus may have been. But with the intense desire to visualise the actual figure of Christ the artists of the

early centuries tended to accept a certain type of figure and face. That was based upon a description in a letter which has been recognised as a forgery. He was depicted as one of fully medium height, with well-proportioned features, clear skin, dark eyes with a gentle glance, and a smooth brow from which the hair fell away on either side. His bearing and aspect expressed a calm, balanced, and gracious character. More modern art, rejecting this unaccredited description and influenced by the pre-Raphaelite painters, has refused to be held by this traditional ideal. A fuller inquiry into the land of Christ's birth, a more accurate history of the Hebrew race and its ideals, a more critical study of the gospels, led the painters to a different manner of presentation. They did not pretend to draw a likeness but only to depict how Jesus may have borne Himself in some action, or under some experience, and to set upon the fitting features of an accepted model the emotion they desired to represent.

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This neglect of any definite likeness was not due to a lack of interest. It may have been that a reverence which shrank from stressing the features of Christ in the flesh may have withheld the pens of the evangelists. But the real and abiding reason was that all the writers were held by a supreme desire. Their controlling purpose was to portray the personality of Jesus. That purpose conditioned the portraiture in many ways. A great personality expressing himself in any impassioned action tends to blind us to any merely physical detail. A noble spirit, aroused to eloquent and moving speech or to dramatic and arresting deed, escapes even from some deformity which may have at first caught the eye. Men and women of appealing moral and spiritual power imprint upon us a deeper truth than the make and fashion of their frame. The passion of their souls enters into the inner mind and abides within the memory. When we speak of them it is that inner and determining spiritual

personality which we describe. So Jesus held men by what He was and what He said and what He did. And as this knowledge of His personality rose in its flood and held men by the awe of its mystery and the wonder of its glory, the things seen by the eyes passed out of their regard. It was His personality in its whole content — *His consciousness, His moral character, His controlling passion of love and desire revealed by His words of power and His deeds of grace, His steadfast will expressed in the decisions and energies of His life*—which was enshrined in men's hearts. We call the writings of the four evangelists by the name of 'Gospels,' but they are more than a message. They are really a delineation of the personality of Christ. The portraits of Jesus are the portraits of a personality.¹

The complete proof of this fact, with its arresting significances, is seen in the truth

¹ The word 'person' with its so varied meanings and its ambiguity, as well as because of its past associations, is wisely out of use.

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that what dwells within every Christian mind is a certain definite conception of the personality of Jesus. Every believer within Christendom has this portrait hanging within the inner chamber of his imagination. For most men and women it was outlined in the teaching received at a mother's knee. It became fuller and clearer through the instruction given in their adolescent years. It was enlarged and touched by many finer lines in the subsequent teaching and preaching to which they attended. In many cases it was made more secure and more appealing by the zeal and delight of their own studies. Both art and literature fulfilled their more sensitive function of delineation. But, it may be ventured, the great hymns in praise of Jesus, so stored with memorable lines of ascription and description, have had as powerful an influence as any other in the imprinting upon Christian hearts of the personality of Jesus.

I

Now in this portraiture there are certain truths which are worthy of attention. One of these is that whether the portraits of Christ's personality hang only within the consciousness of a believing man, or whether they have been described and touched with beauty on some familiar page, they are in universal agreement. That agreement is so well marked that it would be impossible for any teacher to re-draw the character of Christ. Certain words of His may be critically examined. Certain actions have been questioned, and some of them have been almost blamed. Varying interpretations have been given of His purpose in some decision, and of His meaning in some word of difficult interpretation. But all these references and conclusions are based upon the assurance of a well-defined and unquestioned personality. The point of any adverse criticism, or of any denial of Christ's claims, lies in the truth that the

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Christian consciousness has received and recognised a certain definite conception of His personality. The significance of His claims and of those made for Him, the purposes which determined His decisions, and the moral and religious value of His Cross, are not always agreed upon. But His character, all that He was in the power and passion of His personality, is one of the accepted and cherished conceptions. Earnest Christian men hold high debate, and maintain sundering divisions regarding some of the issues and imperatives of the Christian faith. They kneel in one company and they chant the same triumphant words of appeal, when they name Jesus.

Along with this broad agreement in the conception there is the important fact of certain differences in its representation. Some of these differences, and these are the slighter and less important, are due to the truth that our very human nature tends to attach a different value to certain characteristics of a well-known personality. We see that tendency at work in the

portrayal of any historical personage. When we examine the portrait of Oliver Cromwell as drawn by Carlyle, or again by John Richard Green, or again by John Morley, we realise how even deeply discerning men may accept an agreed conception in the larger features, and yet lay stress upon different aspects. The estimates of John Knox by Thomas M'Crie, Charles J. Guthrie, and Robert Louis Stevenson present such contrasts to each other, that the conception of his personality has become less assured than in days gone by. That tendency was at work in the portraiture of Jesus. But here again the agreement in regard to His personality in its central and vital features is so steadfast that the diversities are due rather to a deeper understanding of the features agreed upon, than to any difference in the broad conception of what he was in the flesh.

Beyond these two truths, of agreement in conception and of variety in presentation, there is one fact of not only greater

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but of supreme significance. That is the enlarging knowledge of the personality and the consequent enrichment of the portrait. This is not due to the painting of the portraits from a different angle. If the metaphor may be applied, all the great portrayals of Christ's personality see Him face to face, never in profile. This progressive knowledge resulted in a progressive evaluation. That progressive evaluation is what might have been expected from the records of all biographical interpretations. We know how the estimate of a great figure on the stage of history, through the inquiry into the accepted facts of his life, and the conclusions which have been drawn, has changed in the course of the years. A deeper understanding of the times in which he lived, the problems he faced and the temptations he conquered, have more fully disclosed the mind and the spirit of the man. Sometimes the proofs given in after years of the foresight of his prophecies and the wisdom of his decisions

have raised him in public esteem. The name of Abraham Lincoln evokes a reverence, and his memory moves to tributes of admiration, such as the men of his generation did not accord to him. He is now estimated as a greater, more far-seeing and nobler-minded man than was realised even by some of his intimates. In the same way the portrait of Jesus has had this enlargement and enrichment. The record and the meaning of that truth lies open in the Gospels. Men thought of Him at first only as the prophet of Nazareth. But as time passed on, even His enemies began to realise that there walked among them one whom they had not known when He first appeared. And even among the disciples, the reverence for what He was discerned to be increased with every day of intercourse. So that we understand that outburst of Peter when he was astonished at an unexpected exhibition of the grace of Jesus, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.'

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II

But these reasons for this progressiveness in the portraiture, while they have their own value, are not of high importance. Their action was so tardy and their procedure so insecure that we may well think of Jesus as the misunderstood Christ throughout the larger part of His earthly life. The distinctive reasons for the enlargement and enrichment of the portraiture are more vital. They are three in number.

One of these reasons is the fact of Christ's own gradual self-disclosure to His disciples. That gradualness of disclosure was due to causes which lie open on the pages of the evangelists. He could show Himself, in His deeper being, only as men had eyes to see and ears to hear. It is pathetic to notice how frequent are the allusions to the blindness of the men of His own generation—a blindness both moral and spiritual. We are all haunted by the sorrowful lament so often repeated of men who knew not the day of visitation, and the hour of their opportunity. The record

engrosses the fact in unforgettable sentences—‘What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.’ ‘I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.’ In the story of the marriage at Cana of Galilee there is set the saying which no one understood, not even the mother who knew Him as few others could have done, ‘Mine hour is not yet come.’ But beyond these and similar sentences which need not be stressed, the broad record of the training of the twelve apostles shows that He was conditioned in His self-disclosure by their power to understand His words and deeds. The report of public opinion classified Him with Elijah, or with Jeremiah, or simply as a prophet. The great mass of the people saw no more in Jesus than a messenger of God of greater moral beauty and mightier power than the people of Israel had ever known. Even the disciples, at first, placed Him upon only a greater height of authority than John the Baptist. We may expect that in the

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evangelists we shall see the proofs of this progressive evaluation as the story of His life is told.

But behind and beneath this significant reason there is a deeper one. That is the fact of His own self-realisation.¹ This is a truth from which our eyes are holden, and to which some do not care to turn. We are most naturally and most wisely so absorbed by the divinity of Christ's personality, that we are apt to forget that He was not always fully self-conscious of this relationship to God. When we realise the implications of the simple words, 'He grew in wisdom,' and when we give a due value to the meaning of His being born as a little child, we shall not wonder, but rather praise, when we apprehend that only stage by stage did He realise His own Divine Sonship. The evangelists have no scruples in setting down this truth. When Luke records that in His twelfth year, an age when self-consciousness begins

¹ *Of*. Chap. IX. for a fuller and more detailed statement of the evidence.

to put on its strength, he asked his reproachful mother, 'Wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?' he is recognising the gradualness of Christ's self-realisation. In that scene Jesus is depicted as being assured of a relationship higher, tenderer, and more absolute than that held to the home and household of Nazareth. The accounts of His baptism emphasise the more confident assurance of His true nature. Still more clearly and strikingly the story of the threefold temptation in the wilderness describes the psychological experience through which He passed to the truth of His relationship to God, and the world-governing obedience and service to which He was called. This difficult and neglected truth is seen in its most absolute certainty in the gradual realisation and the anguished acceptance by Jesus of the will of God in His sacrifice on the Cross. The prayer 'Father, if it be possible that this cup pass from me' fits the lips only of one who has gradually realised His mission and its consummation

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in the will of God. It is obvious that a progressive portrait was inevitable.

But beyond these two truths of a progressive self-disclosure and a gradual self-realisation there is one transcending and transforming fact. That was the resurrection of Christ from the dead. The evangelists set down in most brief and unequivocal terms the change of their conception of Jesus when they became assured that He had risen from the dead. Many of our modern lives of Jesus, apparently anxious to portray Him and to expound His teaching as the disciples saw Him and knew Him, stop short at the grave in the garden. But it is impossible to do justice to the testimony of the disciples in any single line of the Gospels unless we realise that from the first sentence they speak of one who not only walked in Capernaum, but overcame death at Calvary. The tremendous change wrought out by that belief is condensed into a few sentences, which leave no one room to doubt that the disciples were possessed by its absolute

truth. As we shall see, the evidence for it, not only in the broad and fearless witness but in the fact and history of the Christian Church, has never been shaken. But its effect on the understanding and interpretation of Jesus is the focus point of our interest here. These disciples were like men travelling through a wilderness and only seeing by the light of distant stars the landscape around them. But when Christ arose from the dead they passed into the dawn of a new day and looked out upon a world where every hill and valley, every shining field and gleaming river, lay before their eyes. As one wrote in after days, 'The darkness is past and the true light now shineth.' A new world lay before them. A new significance of the past and a new hope for the future held their hearts. Above all, as they now looked at Jesus, and as they remembered His words, and His deeds, they saw Him not as the prophet of Nazareth, not as the Master of a chosen band of disciples, not as one who had crowned His testimony

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with His blood, but as a triumphant Redeemer.

This enlarged and enriched conception was not held and discerned at its true value with any swift apprehension. They were blinded at first by the excess of light. Its moral and spiritual significance was too great for men who were slow of heart to believe. But gradually as they remembered His words, as they understood the signs which were given by His miracles, as they reconsidered His prophecies and His counsels, the mystery of His personality began to dawn upon them. There were special hours in which they rose almost to the height of the vision. They were in the spirit, and carried away, to use the words of a later prophet, to a high mountain. There the Holy Spirit glorified Christ, and took of the things of Christ and showed them—however one may phrase such an experience—through that psychological understanding, that deeper insight, that greater assurance of what Jesus Christ was, and is, and ever shall be.

No other knowledge attains to the reach and grasp of this certainty and rises to the height of its moral and spiritual splendour. But we may venture to adapt Shakespeare's haunting lines, describing a well-known human experience, to suggest the method of our entering into this secret of the Lord, which has inspired so many minds with a deathless passion, endued them with power from on high, and flushed their hearts with joy unspeakable.

The idea of His life shall sweetly creep
 Into the study of imagination,
 And every lovely organ of His life
 Shall come apparelled in more precious habit,
 More moving-delicate and full of life
 Into the eye and prospect of the soul.

The path by which those who knew Jesus entered into His secret is open to us. It has been kept by every pilgrim who has found Him to be the way to the Father. We are assured, and can be only perfectly assured by our experience, that He is with us alway unto the end of the world, and that He can become the central reality of our faith, and the Creator of our eternal life.

III

The truth and reality of this portrait, and the fairness of its interpretation, have been denied in every century of the Christian era. The history of the first few centuries in the Christian Church may be described as a record of a costly witness to its truth, on the one hand, and on the other as a persistent continuance in critical assaults upon its credibility. The early Church was an arena of controversy in which the personality of Jesus was debated, and, after a varying issue in the struggle, the faith in the divine Lord was maintained. With each advance in human knowledge, with the advent of every new philosophy, with the acceptance of a more enlightened scientific understanding of nature, and, in our own day, with the adoption of a more definitely psychological method of inquiry, there has been given a somewhat altered portraiture of Jesus. It has been at times a preoccupation with the more gracious features of His face—His

wisdom, His love, His grace, His holiness, His sacrifice. But again, it has been a denial of the things most surely believed, and a redrafting of the features, with the result that men saw only a pathetic thorn-crowned victim, idealised by the adoration of a love that would not relinquish its past dreams. 'The penalty a great man lays on the world is to force it to explain him.' That deep saying of a master in philosophy secures its most arresting proof in every endeavour to explain Jesus. But the explanation of even the masters of the world's thought are not to be accepted because of the repute of their names, or the fascination of their theories. Every master may surely claim to be most fairly explained by his own disciples. And it must not be forgotten that, as Jesus Himself, touching on this point, said with sadness, some may have neither eyes to see nor ears to hear. No one would listen to an estimate of the Sistine Madonna as it hangs in its single chamber in Dresden, from one with a tourist mind, whose chief

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interest lay in the splendour of the frame, or even in the charm of the cherubs on its margin. No one would endure for a moment a critical analysis and interpretation of the sonatas of Beethoven, or listen to any attempt to explain how they rose and fell in their cadences within the spirit of the composer on whose deaf ears their music did not fall, from one who did not know the notes in the scale. Even beyond so simple a truth, there must be remembered the fact that some experiences in the spiritual life may be too faintly impressed upon the memory, and others may be within the knowledge but not within the power of the mind which has conceived them, to describe with convincing insight. Many go on pilgrimage, but few have Bunyan's genius to tell the story.

So it comes to pass that to explain Jesus, and to share in this portraiture, we need not only a knowledge of His times, and of their antecedent history, but a willingness to travel along the way, and to understand the steps of our progress.

We need to look not only into the record of His words and deeds, but to consider their power in the world. The power of a truth, like the power of a seed, is to be described only in the history of its issues in men's lives. There must be, therefore, a willingness to enter into a spiritual world, and a power to apprehend and to appreciate its evidence.

That is where so many of the modern lives of Jesus with their attempts at His portrait have failed. By common confession there is not one of them, although once held in high repute, which holds the mind of men to-day. The Christian faith must abide criticism. The Christian experience must submit to examination. But that is not a possible function to any one who mocks at a realm of being and of order, which is unseen and eternal. Any one whose background is vacant of a general conception of God, and of a universe under His providence, should consider himself to be out of court as a witness in any portraiture of Jesus. If his

philosophy is accurate, as he maintains, we need ask no questions as to his attitude to the claims made for Christ. To examine the documents for the purpose of condemning the experience may be the part of an advocate briefed for denial, but not the part of one whose mind is open as far as any mind can ever be free from subjective bias. But that is the reason why these past lives of Jesus, which had their day of interest, are now merely memorials of a too confident unbelief. The verdict of our own day is that they have failed to explain not only the Jesus of the Gospels, but the Christ of the history and faith of the Christian Church, and that their portraiture is no longer of any value in the interpretation of Jesus.

We need not be surprised that problems upon problems, sometimes quite insoluble, present themselves as an inquiring scholarship searches the records. We need not be dismayed that the personality of Jesus is confessed to be beyond our full and clear understanding. But this certainty

must be reaffirmed that, in the New Testament, we have the evidence of the only competent testimony. Its writers were, in some cases, men of rare genius. The intellectual power of some of the names, associated with its Gospels and its Epistles, is confessed even by men who think that they were deluded. But beyond this notable fact we must not forget that these portraiture were drawn by men who not only staked their lives upon its truth—that need not be stressed—but were transfigured by their faith, as they rose into a holiness which will never be surpassed. They saw the face of Jesus in the power of the Spirit, and they explained their Lord, as it can be read in a single sentence by one of the most commanding minds of all time, ‘God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the personality of Jesus Christ.’

II

THE EVIDENCE FOR THE PORTRAITS

‘We are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: him God raised up the third day; . . . and he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.’—Acts x. 39-42.

THE broad lines of the evidence for the portraits of Jesus are to be found in the historical records of His earthly life, in the certainty of the faith and confession of the first believers, and, with an abiding proof, in the fact of the society which He founded. The living and potent Christian Church is the foundation stone of the pillar of testimony. Yet, as we have seen, for the portraiture of His personality, the supreme and decisive evidence can be found within the compass of the New Testament Scriptures. No hypothesis of collusion, or of superstitious ecstasy, no self-willed

interpretation of its master sentences, and no attempt to bleach the record of its spiritual passion, has lowered, or can deny, the value of its testimony. We have no other of its kind, and we need no other. Its witness remains unshaken.

Every attempt to question its certainties has failed. Now and again the minds of men have been stirred to an expectancy of a decisive change when another manuscript of the New Testament has been discovered. A keener interest has ventured upon the hope that some hitherto unknown official report, or some familiar letter passing between two friends, may throw new light on the life and ideals of the early Christian Church, and shall, in some vital way, alter the conception of the personality of Jesus. The archaeologist has been busy with pick and shovel among the ruins of Palestine, the buried cities of Asia Minor, and the tombs of Egypt, in the hope of discovering some tablet on which the name of Jesus may be inscribed, or of

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finding some fragments of ancient pottery, or some cup or platter which may have been held by Christian hands at a sacramental supper. Others have been searching the rubbish heaps of ancient sanctuaries moved by a desire to find some sealed chamber where a writing may have been preserved engrossing some sentences from Christ's lips. The reward of these patient efforts has been small. Their historic yield is more interesting than informing. The only result has been a reassurance of the unanimity and certainty of the *broad evidence* of the New Testament. In regard to the personality of Jesus, it remains the unique and the sufficient witness.

These New Testament Scriptures are not only singular in their historic value, but they are so fully in accord, and so definite in their affirmations, that they produce an abiding conviction of their value. They stand out as entirely trustworthy not because they have been accredited by courts of the Church. The validity of

their witness does not depend on any claim for their inspiration. It rests upon the nobler assurance of their truth. There have been voices, most clamant a generation ago, and still being listened to in some quarters, which uttered cries of fear as the scholar and historian set to work to examine the manuscripts of the New Testament. Some devout minds have protested against the results set forth by the grammarians. They have protested against the confident assumptions and daring assertions of the critics. They have grown anxious over the results of the inquiries into the sources used by the evangelists. We have heard echoes of the plaint, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.' But there need be no timorous reclaim against the scholar's researches or the critic's conclusions. These toilers are only servants of the faith at the best, and at the worst, merely camp-followers of the Christian community. They cannot touch the secure outlines of the portrait of Jesus,

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or discredit the knowledge and sincerity of the witnesses to their truth.

Even the assertions made as to the authorship of the Gospels do not touch their pre-eminent and convincing evidence. The questions raised as to the interdependence of the narratives have rather raised their value as evidences for the Christian faith. Any assertions of interpolations and redactions by editors, or as to explanatory and marginal notes, afterwards engrossed in the texts, do not affect the value of the simple testimony. Even such a momentous question as the authorship of the Fourth Gospel leaves the broad lines of its witness untouched. It does not matter whether one hand, or three, or perhaps four, can be discerned by some venturesome critic in the writing of this unapproachable record. The Christian community eagerly clings to the belief that this Gospel was written by the beloved apostle John in his older years, when the Spirit of God had taken of the things of Christ and showed them to

him, so that he had a deeper insight into the mind of his Lord. A competent scholarship supports that judgment. But it does not vitally affect the fact of Christ, the record of His life and work and death, and the certainty of His resurrection, to say that the disciple whom Jesus loved was some other than that apostle John who lay in His bosom at the supper table. There is the writing, with its vivid presentation of the scenes of Christ's ministry, its marvellously accurate chronology, its convincing personal details, its instinctive witness to the writer's personal touch with Jesus. It remains the witness of the things most surely believed about Jesus, apart from the question of the writer who penned its words.

I

Here we reach the point of view at which we understand the conclusive value of the New Testament writings. Its writers differed in their birth and their training. They are sometimes to be con-

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trusted in their method of exposition and their sense of values. Still more plainly do they stand somewhat apart from each other in their selection of the incidents, their method of presentation, and the atmosphere with which they surrounded them. But they had all a common faith in Jesus, a common relationship to Him as the Lord, a common conception regarding Him as the eternal Son of God and the Saviour of the world. Still more undeniable is it that they lived their lives within a community of men and women who were not chilled by doubt, or assailed by faltering questions. And beyond all, they had their faith confirmed by an experience which assured them that Christ still spoke to those who waited for His approach to them. Their evidence would not be doubted by any unless it were under the influence of a desire to doubt what there is no will to believe.

But this evidence of the New Testament Scriptures, with their fresh support from the faith and fact of the Christian

community, has been sometimes explained as the supreme instance of a passionate devotion to a memory of one who has passed away, yielding to the urge of an instinct of adoration which has created a sense of present reality. It has been affirmed, in writings of engrossing interest and daring suggestion, that an eager desire to glorify Jesus, and to make Him attractive to the unthoughtful ignorance and credulous faith of simple folk, has conjured up a conception which fascinated these too willing minds. The influence of the surrounding Pagan religions, it is declared, rendered this transformation of the conception of Jesus all too easy. But it must not be forgotten that these apostolic men, nearly all Hebrews, belonged to a race most tenacious of a faith in a God who is single, alone, unseen. It is also to be remembered that the Hebrew race is not only seclusive and separate in its worship and ideals, but, to all time, the most inaccessible and hostile to any other cult or creed. Beyond these insuperable

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obstacles it must be remembered that they were guided and influenced by their own incomparable Old Testament Scriptures, which gave no hint of a crucified and risen Messiah. The conception of the personality of Jesus in the New Testament had to pass through these thick-walled barriers before it could enter the Hebrew mind. It was indeed the stumbling-block to their faith in Christ.

It has again been alleged that the later writers disclose a different conception from that in the simpler pages of the Gospel. It is somewhat difficult to be patient with some of the forms in which this criticism has been presented. The suggestion has been made that the believers did not know the story as it is now recorded in the Gospel narratives, and that legend has clothed a bare record until it is no longer historically trustworthy. This line of assault has gone so far as to maintain that Paul's self-disclosing experience, focussing on 'The Lord, the Spirit,' together with the references to his indifference to know-

ing Christ in the flesh, offer proof that he did not think of Jesus as Mark and Matthew, who have none of Paul's dialectic, have declared him to be. But Paul did not become a servant—a slave—of Christ, without inquiring with eager desire into every detail of his Master's life. Paul knew all about Jesus that Luke, his friend and disciple, could know. To Paul, as to all believers, every detail of Christ's earthly ministry was a precious jewel. His four great Epistles—the Epistle to the Romans, the two Epistles to the Corinthians, and the Epistle to the Galatians—are our earliest authentic and complete New Testament Scriptures. They present a portrait of Christ which had become the focus of the Church's faith, a few years after the Resurrection. They remain the impregnable bulwark against any assumption that the faith in the Risen Christ was an accretion to the simpler belief in Jesus. Paul was an evangelist and a missionary, and his letters to his converts reaffirmed and

defended his teaching. He did not repeat the message, or tell again the story, they had heard from his lips. All he required to do was to make a passing reference to the facts proclaimed, the things most surely believed. And the most decisive proof of the unity and strength of the conception of Jesus is that it is possible to construct not only the character but the personality of Jesus affirmed in the Gospels from the abundant and tender and arresting references in his Epistles. Beyond this, his Epistles prove that the outstanding facts were fully known, and that what held the hearts of the Christian community was the certainty of Christ, the assurance of His death and resurrection, and the revelation of God's purpose in and through the sending of His Son. This Jesus is always the same Lord who was born of a woman, died under the law, and rose again to be man's Redeemer and the judge of the quick and the dead.

II

On this basis, then, of the trustworthiness of the evidence of the New Testament, both in itself and in its many witnesses, the conception of Christ's personality can be realised and supported. As we have seen, it is a conception of a progressive evaluation, which has been a progressive exaltation, but every portrait portrays the same Lord. It is not easy, nor is it necessary, to be altogether definite as to the number of distinctive portraitures in the New Testament. But there are at least five stages, or expression points, in the progressive delineation. Each of these is controlled, or at least regulated, to a certain degree, by a ruling conception. They follow each other in a recognised chronological order. That order does not depend on the date of the writing of any gospel or epistle, although, as we might expect, the later writings have a larger and a more daring view. Paul's Epistles are the earliest authentic writings by a single

hand in the New Testament. But their presentation is not the first in the historic order. Yet the supreme certainty which pervades every sentence Paul wrote is also the supreme certainty which held the mind of the writers of the first and of the last line in the New Testament Scriptures. The opening sentence of the simplest Gospel, with the closing adjuration of the final page, is written under the inspiration of the great cry of the whole New Testament—Jesus and the Resurrection. Of that Jesus there are five portraits.

The first is that drawn by the men who saw Jesus as He lived in the land of His birth, who companied with Him all the time that He went out and in among them, who were eye-witnesses of His glory, who heard Him speak, and saw Him manifest His power throughout His brief ministry, and were with Him when He went to His Cross, and knew His fellowship after He rose again from the dead. The actual writing does not come, in any likelihood, from any of their hands.

But it is their witness which is engrossed in the first three Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. These three Gospels are called the Synoptic Gospels, and in that word the conception of drawing a portrait is enshrined. The term Synoptic implies an account given from the same view-point and portraying the same aspect. These writers have the same purpose—to tell the story of the ministry of Jesus, and to record His sayings and doings, so that the Gospel of God, in and through Jesus, might be proclaimed to men. The point of view that they take, and up to which they lead, is that *Jesus is the Christ*.

The second portrait is that drawn by a writer who claims to have had a unique experience and a most intimate knowledge. This is the writer of the Fourth Gospel. He affirms that he was one of Christ's first adherents, and became the most tenderly regarded of the disciple band. He was so cherished by Jesus that he could be called 'the disciple whom

Jesus loved.' But he painted his picture, as the writing confesses, long after Christ ascended, when he himself was an old man. As we have already seen, scholarship has been busy in inquiring into the claim of the writer of this Gospel to be the apostle John, and has been coming to conclusions as to the signs of more than one hand in its composition. But, as we have noted, there are cogent reasons for accepting the conclusion that the writer of its incidents, and especially of its closing pages, apart from the postscript with which it concludes, was this young and early adherent to Christ and His mastership. The portrait here is not after the manner of Matthew, or Mark, or Luke. They were intent on portraying Jesus as the Christ, of engrossing His words and deeds with their consummation in His victory over sin and death. But the Gospel of John is that of one who is recalling the outstanding truths taught and manifested by Jesus under one controlling purpose. That purpose is to declare that

Jesus is the Son of God, the Father. It is the Gospel, in its main outline, of one who had brooded in long hours of silence over all he knew and had understood of the personality and work of Jesus. For that reason he neglects, or at least does not care to set down, any of those simple facts that make the childhood and youth of Jesus so full of charm. For him Jesus is 'the Word made flesh,' whose glory men saw, but whose depth of moral and spiritual passion, and whose relationship to God, were too wonderful for those who merely companied with Him in the flesh to understand. He records the incidents of Christ's human life after a fashion that shows he understands Jesus to be the Christ. But he passes on to draw the portrait of this *Jesus as the Son of God, the Father*.

The third portrait is that drawn by the members of the primitive Church after Christ had died and risen again. It was the conception into which those grew who had seen Jesus in the flesh and

had also seen Him after He rose again from the dead. It is therefore a record of the way in which that supreme truth became the foundation fact of the Christian faith, and of its amazing meaning both for the life that now is and that which is to come. They were assured that Jesus Christ was alive, and that He still came into their gatherings in the power of His spirit, still spoke to them in their time of need, and was the Lord of their living and their dying. This is the portrait we find in the Acts of the Apostles, written by Luke. So that we can say that two of these portraits of Jesus are from a single hand, and that the hand of one who had not seen Jesus in the flesh. It has been remarked that the portrait in the opening chapters of the Book of the Acts is much alike to that which we find in the First Epistle of Peter. That conjecture can be supported by the historic presentation of Peter as the dominant mind in the early years of the founding of the Christian Church, and the impassioned witness to

Christ's resurrection. But Luke passes on to draw a picture of Jesus which Peter, at first, was unable to commend. Luke understood more clearly what was implied in Christ's personality, as he realised the far-reaching power of the life and work of Jesus. Here the portrait is that of *Jesus as the Risen Lord*.

The fourth portrait is that depicted by those who accepted the record of the first three Gospels and the history engrossed in the Book of the Acts, but had begun to inquire into the transcendent power and eternal significance of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus. It is that conception cherished by men of the original company of believers, who had not seen Jesus in the flesh. With them that disclosure of Jesus as one who was born in Bethlehem, and lived in Nazareth, and went about doing good, and healing all manner of disease, while devoutly believed, was not given the first place in their minds. What they dwelt upon was the eternal meaning of His life and death,

and the mystery and grace and power revealed and become potent in His sacrifice and His victory over sin, and all sin's consequence. One great religious genius has depicted this conception as he himself entered into it, and as he called men to be fellow-believers in the love and grace, the leadership and fellowship of Christ. We sometimes think of Paul as the theologian of the early Church, and thereby we do him injustice. We should place him in the higher rank of the evangelist, and of that noblest of evangelists who is a missionary to the castaway and lost. For this is the portrait of *Jesus as the Divine Redeemer of the world*.

The fifth portrait is that drawn by men absorbed by the conception of the Lord Christ who had risen and ascended to the right hand of God. They do not look back so devotedly to the idylls of the Gospel story, or to the great day when Jesus showed Himself alive by many infallible signs. They are rather looking up into heaven, but looking as men who are

assured that Jesus shall reign on the earth. They see Him as One who is glorified, unto whom all power and authority have been given, who is still carrying on His redeeming work. They seem to have greatly escaped from the tyranny of the thought that Jesus shall come again in His bodily presence, and that at no distant hour. They rather depict Him as One who is working and waiting for the coming of His kingdom. This is a twofold portrait, for it is a presentation of Jesus as both Priest and King. It is to be found in the Epistle to the Hebrews and in the Book of the Revelation. In the Epistle to the Hebrews we have Jesus still proclaimed as a man who was tempted as other men, but now He is raised far above prophets and angels because He is the Son of God, who has passed within the veil, and become the High Priest of humanity. It is also to be found drawn in the Book of the Revelation, which proclaims Jesus as the everlasting King. The writer of this book keeps close

touch with the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. His opening ascription, 'Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us a kingdom of priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever,' gives us the point of view which makes a unity of this two-fold portraiture. Both writers keep in mind the human life of Jesus. Both remember His Cross and its sacrifice. Jesus suffered without the gate. Jesus is the Lamb who was slain. But now He is exalted to be the High Priest and the King of all humanity. This is the portrait of *Jesus as the everlasting Priest and King*.

These five portraits present the progressive conceptions of Jesus, accepted by the primitive Christian Church, and attested by them as witnesses to their truth. They are really the only witnesses whose evidence is sufficient and final. The story of His earthly life can be read in no other pages. Every subsequent affirmation as to His humanity, every criticism

of His sayings and doings, every inquiry into His mind and its reach and grasp, must relate themselves to these records. In the same way every subsequent and continuing history of the society He founded, every attempt to analyse the faith in whose atmosphere it still lives and breathes, every endeavour to penetrate into the mystery of His personality, must first examine and present its verdict on these five representations. Not only do they display the one clear draft of His features, but they give us the only description of His immediate environment. There may be fresh applications of His teaching, a more discerning insight into the inner springs of His action, a profounder and yet more simply expressed knowledge of His personality—all more convincing to the modern mind. But these five portraits remain the final court of appeal, not only because of the convincing and consistent presentation of the story of His earthly years, and of its power to create a faith akin to that whose de-

votion it records, but because in and through them the Lord still speaks to men, still redeems them from the bondage of their sin, and still leads them into that society upon whose work He sets His seal.

III

It must not be overlooked that however artless, in the simplest sense of the term, this portraiture is, it was distinctively self-conscious. The authors of this progressive evaluation of the personality of Jesus were well aware that they were disclosing an ever larger and more exalted characterisation. They knew that they were passing on from a recital of His sayings and doings to a disclosure of the truth of His inner being, and then to an interpretation of His individuality and His ideals. Then, as they were also aware, they were proceeding to an estimate of His work for, and in, the world, and finally to a vision of His final dominion. But they most distinctly disclaim any suggestion that this evolution in their knowledge is due to a

more critical and more discerning appreciation. They affirm, with a somewhat overlooked insistence, that in this progressive portraiture they were enlightened and inspired by the Holy Spirit. That affirmation we might express in the terms of our own day, as a certainty that God Himself, the eternal Spirit, who was manifested in the flesh in Jesus, was still manifesting Himself, as a distinctive personality, in His Spirit. And this truth they found to be proved by their experience, that He entered into the inner shrine of the spirit of men, and dwelt within them, as an inspiring and renewing and enlightening personality. It was as the Holy Spirit of God enlightened the mind, quickened the conscience, and subdued all the powers of men to His will, that they 'saw the Lord.'

That is clearly marked in the record. It was in the silence and rapture of the Mount that they first saw Jesus transfigured. It was on the day of Pentecost that this Holy Spirit was poured out upon

them, and they were baptized into a new life, with new powers of insight and of understanding. It was in an experience, too sacred to be exposed to common eyes, that Paul received his unutterable vision. As F. W. H. Myers has set it in his noble description,

‘Then through the mid complaint in my confession,
 Then through the pang and passion of my prayer,
 Leaps with a start the shock of His possession,
 Thrills me and touches, and the Lord is there.’

It was in the hours when they heard the voice of the Spirit that they saw the greater glory of the Lord. It was when they were in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, that they were carried away to the viewpoint, from which they saw the vision of the Christ to be. There are some to whom these declarations of the New Testament writers are only the ecstatic words of men who have lost touch with sober reality. Yet no writers can be more frank or more definite in their acknow-

ledgments, that they stumbled at the greatness of the revelation, and that doubt and unbelief assailed their minds, and that they reached the certainty of its truth as they faced a cynical and scornful world. Their one reply, they set down in their records and in their letters, was what they were taught under the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit. For that reason their unbelief passed into bewilderment, their bewilderment to wonder, their wonder rose into faith, and their faith gave them new eyes to see their vision of the Lord.

This psychological history of the enlightening and revealing power of the Holy Spirit is repeated and confirmed step by step in the experience of the individual soul. Every disciple of Jesus, according to his measure of endowment and enduement, grows in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. He understands how his succession of portraits of Jesus 'decomposes but to recompose.' To a young and unlessoned soul the Jesus of the Gospels is the only figure on his

spiritual horizon. As years pass the wonder of His eternal Sonship begins to bear in upon his mind and to occupy his thought. The day comes when the proclamation of His name and the increase of His kingdom call forth his energies. Then, as the sin of the world, the transgressions of his own bolder years, and the deeper rebellion of his own will begin to appal him, he sees, as he did not see in his unstained years, the love and grace of the eternal sacrifice. Finally, as the decades increase, and the devotion of his consecration becomes more intense, he lifts his eyes to the life to come, and in great hours, whose communings he seldom reveals, he sees Jesus as the everlasting Priest and King.

It would be well if even the most devout Christian men understood how utterly they are dependent on this increasing knowledge of the personality of Jesus. Every hour of renewed faith, every day of baptism into the spirit, every year of the re-energising of the will is marked

by a fresh consciousness of the great personality. What is known as a revival of religion, when a movement of quickened faith and more specific devotion passes through a Christian community, is really an advance in the recognition of the personality of Jesus. That arising out of apathy and indifference, that return from the prayerless habits even of the devotional life, that escape from worldliness, are but the issues and consequences of having looked up afresh into Christ's face. As men have entered anew into His secret, they have knelt at His feet, and have hailed Him as their King. 'Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.'

III

JESUS—THE CHRIST

‘Whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.’—MARK viii. 29.

THE five distinctive portraits of Jesus in the New Testament are in complete concord with each other. No one has ever doubted that they are portraits of the same personality. But it must not be forgotten that they were drawn by different hands and at different times, and that each shows an advance of knowledge and of understanding on the part of the members of the Christian community. No one can be quite sure of the order in which these portraits were presented by those who preached Christ and the Gospel. But a certain order can be set down as that in which Jesus presented Himself to those who became His disciples,

and in that order they shall be considered now. The first of these five is that of Jesus as drawn in the three Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Its distinctive aspect is that of Jesus, the Christ.

I

These three Gospels do not claim to be biographies of Jesus. Neither Matthew, nor Mark, nor Luke set out to write a full account of the years of His life. They make no endeavour to tell us much about His childhood or youth. Mark does not make any reference to His life in Nazareth. They leave on one side many of the things which are deeply interesting in every biography, but have no signal importance for their purpose. The so-called Gospels of the Infancy were doubtless written to gratify this desire. It would have been well if no such attempt had been made. These three evangelists were inspired by the purpose of writing an account of the ministry of Jesus, and they fastened their

attention on the mission and work of the Master. They were intent on showing how Jesus began His ministry, what He said and did in the course of it, how it was closed, all leading up to the fulfilment of its supreme purpose of revealing God and commending His grace to men. A complete life of Jesus would have been an amazing and a wondrous mystery. We understand that fine hyperbole, set down at the close of the Fourth Gospel, when the writer confesses that the story is too great to be told. 'And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they could be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.' They were content to describe Jesus as He lived among men, went about doing good, teaching, pitying, and redeeming men, and therefore dying for them and rising again in unhindered power. These writings are named the Gospels, and the word is borrowed from the opening sentence of the Gospel of Mark. But in

reality they are not so distinctively Gospels, or messages of good tidings, as they are presentations of the mind and the grace and the divine personality of Jesus.

The order in which these three Gospels are found in our New Testament is not the order in which they should be placed. Mark should be first, for it is the earliest Gospel. It is also the shortest and the simplest. Its writer is said, with some probability, to have been the young man in the linen garment who fled away naked on the night in which Jesus was betrayed. If we may accept further assertions, he belonged to a family which was well known in the Christian community in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Mary, and she was a woman of means, for she had a large house in Jerusalem. It was in her house, as Luke affirms, that many were praying together on the night on which Peter was delivered from prison. There is an ancient tradition that Mark wrote under the direction of Peter, and a certain

correspondence of view can be noted between Mark's Gospel and that of the First Epistle of Peter. Mark's portrait of Jesus is direct, vivid, intense in feeling and dramatic in manner.

Matthew's Gospel is more ordered in its arrangement. It is quite evident to any careful reader that there is evidence of a repeated method of grouping together the teaching of Jesus, followed by the grouping of a number of His miracles and other deeds of compassion. Upon the face of it there appears many proofs that it was written by a Hebrew who appealed to Hebrew minds. It describes Jesus with reference to the knowledge and the point of view of a well-informed Israelite. Luke's Gospel presents many contrasts both with that of Mark and of Matthew. Luke was a Gentile, the only non-Jewish writer of the New Testament Scripture. He did not become a Christian until many years after Jesus died. But Luke has been recognised as a man of historical genius. He describes his own methods, and assures

his readers that he wrote only after making diligent inquiries at those who had seen Jesus, and that he had carefully searched into what they had testified. His love of accuracy, his eagerness for reliable proof, and his instinct for a convincing setting, are as remarkable as the accuracy of his references to contemporaneous history.

The most significant note in this regard is that both Matthew and Luke must have had before them either Mark's Gospel, or a similar writing by some other hand, or some source from which Mark had drawn before them. The proof of this is that both Matthew and Luke engross many of the incidents and parables from Mark's Gospel, and set them, as a rule, in Mark's own words. Sometimes they re-set, and sometimes they enlarge, the story as told by Mark. The result is that we have three inter-related and confirming testimonies to the words and deeds of Jesus and three portrayals of His mind. There are differences in the selection and inclusion of the incidents recorded, and of

the connection in which they occur. Each of the evangelists has his own controlling purpose. Mark pictures Jesus as the prophet of Galilee who revealed Himself as the Christ. Matthew is impressed by the assurance from the first that He is the Messiah of the Jews. Luke regards Him as the Lord of all mankind with broad human sympathies and with wondrous compassion for the publican and the sinner. We owe to Luke the record of some of the most moving and large-hearted of the parables of Jesus. But, in the case of all three, the climax to which each of the writers moves is that of showing Jesus to be the Christ, and disclosing the true significance of the term.

II

When we examine this threefold portraiture the most impressive fact is that Jesus is truly human. The humanity of Jesus is manifest on every page. He was born of a woman. He lived as a child in a humble home. He spent the larger

part of His life fulfilling the lowly conditions of the little highland village of Nazareth. Like other children, He grew in wisdom and in stature, although the suggestion in the record that He grew also in favour with God and man, must not be overlooked. He attended the synagogue school, and, as an after incident declares, proved Himself a wondrous scholar of the Old Testament Scriptures. He learned a trade, as every Jewish child did, and was known as 'the carpenter.' His humanity was manifested in the whole round of life. He hungered and He thirsted. He was weary, and He slept His weariness away. He sat at men's feasts, and ate and drank with them. He shared the whole human round of mortal sorrows, and He wept human tears. Most decisively of all, He was tempted in all points as men are, and He prayed for help and for light to know God's will and for courage to do it. He had to live by faith in God, the Father, as others must do. Nothing is more evident than the perfect

humanity of Jesus, as He is depicted in these three Gospels.

This humanity is evident in ways which are even more important. He was not omnipresent. He could not appear now here, now there. When He passed from Nazareth to Capernaum, or went up to Jerusalem at the Passover, He walked the common road as others did. He was not omnipotent. He submitted Himself to all the conditions of frail humanity. He was limited, as others are limited, by the subtle oppositions and contradictions of men. He could not do some miracles because of men's unbelief. He was not omniscient. He had to ask questions for His information. There were many things He confessed He did not know. When the woman with the issue of blood came behind Him in the crowd and touched the hem of His garment, He turned round to ask, 'Who touched me?' He chose Judas, and did not know at the time that he would betray Him. He was not certain that He must drink

‘the cup’ of His final sacrifice. He made the express confession of His ignorance regarding one of the supreme events of all time. ‘Of that day knoweth no man, not even the Son, but the Father.’ No one who saw Him as He passed by ever doubted His perfect humanity.

III

But these three Gospels are quite as insistent that He was not a man as others are. There are some proofs of this truth which are sometimes overlooked. One of these is that He was not a man with a merely human temperament. There are four recognised temperaments—the sanguine, the phlegmatic, and choleric, and melancholy. Few exhibit only one of these distinctive temperaments, but in most cases one of them is dominant. The man of the sanguine temperament is hopeful, sunny-hearted, eagerly responsive, optimistic. The man of the phlegmatic temperament is placid, reserved in speech, slow in action, but steadfast in judgment

and in affection. The man of the choleric temperament is instant in his impulses, often fierce and even avengeful in anger, swift to take action, an eager friend, and a bitter foe. The man of the melancholic temperament is moody, given to brooding, tempted to take a sombre view of life and often shadowed by its sadnesses. We recognise these temperaments not only as they are to be seen in the great personages of history, but in those with whom we live in daily life. Every one of the apostles, of whom we have any fulness of record, is shown as he is affected by a divers temperament. We cannot ascribe any particular temperament to Jesus. What we can say is that He had a full-orbed, equipoised, and unflawed humanity.

Another fact of Christ's humanity was the reach and range of His knowledge, and the more than human penetration of His insight. The world's great thinkers have had their praises recorded, and our debt to them can be summed up in statements which satisfy the judgment of their

most ardent devotees. But the attempt to place the name of Jesus in the list of the most notable names in the world's history, or in the succession of the great religious leaders of all time, only emphasises the utter impossibility of including Him in any such classification. Every Christian mind, at least, strains and quivers if some pert, modern writer sets the name of Jesus as one of that select band to whom men attribute genius. It is not possible to apply the word 'genius' to Jesus with its usual interpretation. His knowledge was not the knowledge of one who was merely a man. His wisdom has a reach and a range that no other teacher ever attained. He thought as no other one ever thought within the sphere of the Spirit. In the action of the divine upon the human, as evidenced in history, most men are willing to place the Hebrew prophets in the first rank of power. But no one outside the narrow range of the Jewish mind will allow any prophet to come any nearer Christ than to stand

in His shadow. He interpreted their wisdom and corrected their highest reach after things unseen. As a consequence, His words stand out in a class by themselves. His parables are more than human not only in their brevity and simplicity, their memorableness and their instant light, but in their grace of expression and power of appeal. His questions and His answers are the questions and answers of all time. As the record declares, 'He spake as having authority.' 'Whence hath this man letters, never having learned?' was the wonder of His foes. 'Never man spake as this man' was the witness of His friends. 'Verily, verily, I say unto you' enshrines the claim that Jesus made to be a teacher who taught with a power that no man ever had. As has been finely suggested, if a man of supreme genius enters the room we bow. If Jesus entered we would kneel.

In the same line of reference there is the declaration that He was not merely a man in His power. There can be no doubt

but that He worked what we commonly call miracles. The cheap outcries against a miracle as a breach of law have died away. Scientific discoveries have proved that some recorded events which were declared to be breaches of natural law were obediences to a higher and subtler law than had yet been ascertained. Men of acknowledged scientific attainments are numbered among believers in what is termed the miraculous. The healing of the sick, even by a word, is no longer so blandly discredited. To the Christian mind, with its wiser understanding of God, not merely as a God of law but as a will, moving freely in the realms both of matter and spirit, with its assurance of the action of the Divine Spirit upon the human and of the spiritual forces upon the material, the fact that Jesus wrought miracles is the absolutely expected event. The whole story of His repute—of the crowds of sick and maimed and palsied who were taken into His presence, of the influence which He attained, of the ex-

pectations that the people cherished, and of the fear which the rulers had of Him—indicates that He had a power over both the flesh and the spirit such as no other one had. The reply to John the Baptist recites these evidences of the power of Jesus. 'The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.' It is not too daring to say that Jesus is still working these miracles of power, and that His 'signs' are still to be seen by those who have eyes to see.

IV

We rise into a higher region of evidence when we speak of the power He claimed to forgive sins. To the impotent man at the pool He said, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.' To the woman who was a sinner in the city whom He bade to go in peace, and to the penitents who sought Him in the anguish of their consciences, Jesus presented Himself as one who had the

power to forgive men's sins. He claimed to be a judge of men's words and deeds, and He exercised that power. In His forward look He spoke, in words which bewildered and appalled many who heard them, of His sitting on the throne and judging the world. This exaltation of His divine power and authority is supported by a fact which is much overlooked. That fact is that Jesus did not pray either with His disciples, or as He taught them to pray. There is no record of any cry on His lips for the forgiveness of His sins. The Lord's Prayer is the prayer He taught His disciples, but its most appealing sentence, 'Forgive us our debts,' is not found upon His lips. The record of His times of prayer is full and clear. Rising early before day, seeking some lonely place, ascending some mountain, passing into some quiet wood, Jesus prayed, but He prayed alone. It was the prayer of a communion and fellowship of one who lived ever the life of a perfect obedience to God, as no mere man ever did.

This super-humanity was expressed in a term which strews these three Gospels. That term is 'The Son of man.' It is His own striking phrase of reference to Himself. But the most arresting fact about it is that it is found only on His own lips. He is never so named by the disciples. The source of this appellation has been sought by many inquirers, but no one has reached even a self-assured certainty. There can be no doubt but that Jesus adopted it because it expressed, in a comprehensive way, the aspect in which He wished to present Himself. It is also clear that it was well known to the Jewish people, and that its use by the Hebrew prophets, and most definitely in the Book of Daniel, had given it a significance which they understood. It had become a cherished term among the devout of Christ's time. So that we may confidently believe that Jesus, in making use of it, was making a claim to fulfil all the revelation it was meant to convey. We may sum up its power of expression by

reading it as the affirmation of His perfect humanity, His identification with the whole human race, His acceptance of the conditions of life required of every man. But, above and beyond these implications, there is the declaration of being the representative of the people of God, who can both stand at His bar and plead for men, and can, with a different pleading, lead men back to God. He was not merely a Son of man, but the Son of man, and therefore endowed and endued with a leadership and a service of humanity, and called to a ministry which would pass on to sacrifice, but would issue in victory. When we turn our minds backward and reflect upon the portrayal of Jesus by these evangelists, we realise how perfectly this term expresses the personality they have conceived.

This conception had been reached when Jesus led the disciples northward to the solitudes of Caesarea Philippi. The record reveals that Jesus had clearly discerned that conception of Him and of His mission which now possessed their minds. He

took them northward away from the stress and storm of the scorn and persecution which they suffered along with Him, that He might lead them across the threshold of a further truth. As they sat together in the quiet of the evening He put the question of His heart, 'Whom do men say that I am?' They answered Him, 'John the Baptist; but some say, Elijah; and others, One of the prophets.' Then came the question that touched the quick, 'But whom say ye that I am?' Then Peter rose to the great height of his confession, 'Thou art the Christ,' and the benediction came to Christ's lips. The portrait of Jesus underwent a change which all artists know when a single line or two will express an inner reality which has not yet looked out from the canvas. He had already declared that He was greater than any earthly ruler such as the Queen of Sheba, or even King Solomon in his glory. He affirmed that He had a more sacred authority than that enshrined in the Temple. Now He has imprinted upon

their minds that He is the long-expected, eagerly - hoped - for, passionately - desired Messiah. Only one other height they shall yet ascend. That is to see Jesus as the Son of God. But in these three Gospels that further ascent is not definitely gained, although the opening verse of the Gospel of Mark declares that what is to be written is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Yet these disciples are now trembling on the brink of such an advance in their conception of Jesus. For when the Son of man is seen in His glory, as He comes forth from the fellowship of God, transfigured in form and face, the Son of man will also be seen as the Son of God.

V

At this point these three Gospels pass on to what may be called the second volume of the history. It is clearly marked in them all, but most decisively in the ordered Gospel of Matthew. There we read, 'From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto

Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.' The writer uses the significant word 'began' to indicate that this shewing unto the disciples was a recurrent and continuing revelation to men unable at first to receive it, and only gradually rising to the height of its possibility, but not attaining it until events broke it upon them as with a storm.

The reason of their slowness to understand is disclosed in the avenue to the tragic events which close the life of Jesus. They had realised that He was the Christ. They were ready to give Him a deeper reverence and a more unquestioning obedience. Three of them were now prepared in spirit to climb a mountain apart and to see Him transfigured. But they were not prepared for a Christ who should suffer and die on a day of seeming defeat and of abasing shame. Their conception of Jesus as the Christ had no shadow on the brow, no cry of anguish from the lips. They record the fact of their ignorance and

misunderstanding with the simple veracity of all three Gospels. They set down His solemn and repeated forecast of His sufferings and death. But we know how any preconceived and ardently desired consummation blinds men's eyes as to a personality, or as to the part he may play in a great cause or a national advance. These men were all held by the Jewish passionate assurance of an earthly dominion under their Messianic king.

‘They were all looking for a king

To slay their foes and lift them high.’

They dreamed that they would sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. They quarrelled over the chief places in the kingdom, and the more ambitious saw themselves sitting on either hand of the king in the place of power. They believed that the Messianic Christ would enter Jerusalem in triumph, and would establish again the kingdom of the never-to-be-forgotten time of David. This vision splendid of a future worldly glory blinded their eyes to the meaning of the sorrowful bearing

of Jesus, the warning messages of His parables, and the tender protests of His lips.

Nothing is more engaging than the simple and unadorned way in which the closing incidents of the three Gospels are described. Here the record is fuller and more detailed. But the arresting fact is that despite the engrossing interest of the incidents, the portraiture of the personality holds our eyes more absolutely than before. The persons He meets, the homes He enters, the warnings He utters, the appeals He makes, the tears He sheds, the controversies which break upon Him, the hostility He arouses, with the story of the way He passes to the supper in the Upper Room, and to His betrayal and His denial, and His forsaking by themselves, are little more than the scenery of the stage on which He moves. These are all set down so simply and artlessly, that one who would read the record for the first time would find that the actual event of the crucifixion would take him by surprise. The broad witness of the narratives shows that the

day of the Cross broke upon the little band of disciples with a suddenness which paralysed both mind and will. As they fled in their fear, the conception of the Christ which had now been eclipsed is set in the sentence, 'We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel.'

Then came the great change. The cry passed from lip to lip, 'The Lord is risen.' The effect was as though the portrait had been before them almost in the darkness. But a great light shone upon it, till the features stood out in an entrancing moral and spiritual beauty. They remembered His words. They recalled His warnings. They understood His purpose. They began to reason with each other as to the meaning and the method of His dying. 'O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?' These words condense into a brief question the process of thought and of understanding by which the disciples understood that Jesus was indeed the Christ.

IV

JESUS—THE SON OF GOD THE FATHER

‘These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have life through his name.’—JOHN XX. 31.

THE portrait of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels is that of a personality with a full-orbed humanity. But although He was a man, He was not quite as other men. The writers add proof upon proof that He differed from men as no one else ever did. That difference He Himself proclaimed when He called Himself ‘The Son of man,’ by which was implied a pre-eminent and representative manhood, with an authority and with powers never before shown by man, and with a ministry to be accomplished which no mere man could discharge. These Gospel writers, with an absolute honesty, describe their misunderstanding even of His most significant

words, and the slow path of their progress into the fulness of the light in which at length they saw that Jesus was the Christ, who had come to be the deliverer of the people of God. But it was not until He walked among them when risen from the dead that the light flashed back on all the way He had led them, and they saw Him to be 'the Lord.'

I

In the Fourth Gospel we find ourselves reading a different account, and in touch with a writer whose style is so distinctive as to place Him in a different class even from so skilful a historian as Luke. The writer of the Fourth Gospel is a consummate artist, if that word may be used with its noblest significance. He discloses a mind which has a deep sympathy with the tenderer and saner mysticism of the religious life. His gospel has a touch of close intimacy and a securer knowledge, with a deeper penetration, than the other Gospels ever attain. Obviously the first

question we must face is that of the authorship of the Gospel before we can use its evidence and estimate its portrait.

This question was touched upon in a previous chapter for the purpose of showing that the question of authorship is not vital to its recognition as a witness. Apart from the certainty of the writer, the Fourth Gospel is a convincing witness because it represents the assured conviction of the Christian community, and delineates the conception held by believing men at no distant date after Jesus died. It does not show another Jesus from that depicted in Mark, and Matthew, and Luke. Its portrait is not only consistent with theirs, it is its complement. It makes no higher claim for Jesus than they make. The Synoptic Gospels do not hesitate to declare that Jesus is the judge of all mankind, that He only knew the Father with the confidence of an only begotten son, that through Him alone can men know the Father, and that to Him belongs the divine function of forgiving sin. Yet

there is no need to desert the conclusion that the writer of this Gospel was the apostle John, and that the words of its record were of his dictation. It need not be claimed that every word of the Gospel as we have it came from his lips. We can believe that we have in the briefer, more striking and more pregnant sentences, the actual words of Jesus. A large number of the most daring, unforgettable, and most arresting declarations could not be lightly put into any other lips, and could not have found acceptance with the Christian community had their authenticity not been assured. Yet some of the utterances of Jesus may have been condensed, and others may have been enlarged, with the purpose of explaining their allusions. Some of the reports of the conversations and discussions and addresses may be more elaborate than the actual utterances, with the purpose of more accurately presenting the meaning of some strange and pregnant truth. We need not think that these records were written in

the mind and spirit of a clerk to a committee. But, having regard to the course of the narrative, the incidents unrecorded by the Synoptics which have been introduced, the exactness with which days and hours are marked, the modest yet definite affirmations which would fit only an apostle's lips, and especially one who had been given the place of a beloved intimate, and, above all, the personal references of the writer, the conclusion which is more than probable is that the author of the Fourth Gospel was John—the disciple whom Jesus loved.

As we pass from the Synoptic Gospels to the Gospel of John we are struck by the difference in the contents and in the style. In every line it exhibits the mind of one who was a disciple of Jesus. He describes his Master in scenes where only the disciple band saw Him, and he reports some of His most poignant words uttered upon occasions when only the most intimate could have heard Him speak. Beyond this it is clear that John wrote

his Gospel with a different purpose from that of Mark or Matthew or Luke. Luke describes their common purpose when he describes his Gospel as the record 'of all that Jesus began both to do and teach.' That was not the purpose of John, and he does not try to unfold the panorama of the early life and Galilean ministry of the Master. He omits those scenes with which, whoever he was, he must have been familiar, that remain the treasures of the painters and illustrators of Christ's earthly life. His purpose is not to tell a story, but to depict a personality, and distinctively a divine personality. To that one purpose he devotes both all his mind and his skill. He portrays Jesus moving about among men, living with them, looking out on a wide world with a passion for revealing the Father to all mankind, and a definite mission of making the sacrifice for the sins of the world. In the fulfilment of that ministry, Jesus, as John saw Him, passes on through contempt and scorn and suffering and

death to do the will of His Father in redeeming humanity. The Jews are seldom mentioned except in terms which indicates how far beyond any local or national redemption this writer looks, although he was himself a Hebrew. The result is that Jesus is displayed more clearly in His divine nature and mission than in any one of the Synoptic Gospels. That is not an accident of the writer's style. It is the result of a clearly self-conscious purpose, which is disclosed as the Gospel concludes. 'And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have life through his name.' (John xx. 30, 31.)

But the most marked difference between the Synoptics and John lies in the more delicately touched, more fully described, and more clearly understood divineness of the personality. We are surprised that there is no reference to the birth of Jesus,

and no dealing with the questions which were raised regarding the virgin birth, and the Incarnation. We cannot but wonder that not even in a single clause is there any reference to the question of how Jesus became man. The marks of His humanity are constantly affirmed. We are shown Him weary, and we see His face wet with tears. We mark His struggle to know God's will, and His human anguish on the Cross is detailed. He records the fact that the print of the nails remained on the hands after Jesus rose from the dead. But it is clear that this writer knew Jesus when the full revelation of His personality had been made, and that His divine glory so illumined and overawed his mind, and became so enthralling a certainty, that the record of His birth and infancy ceased to hold him with their interest. His purpose is to portray Jesus as the Son of God the Father.

II

In fulfilling this purpose, John begins by a preface which has a twofold office. As we have seen, he does not mention either Bethlehem or Nazareth, and he neglects to give even a hint of the youth and early manhood of Jesus. In his preface he begins his presentation of the truth in Jesus in the infinite ages of the past. His opening words, 'In the beginning was the Word,' take us back to the august and sublime opening of the Book of Genesis. He does not take us to see the face of Mary; he bids us look beyond all human descent right up into the face of God. The writer could not fail to know the burden which the affirmation of the virgin birth laid upon many thoughtful and questioning minds. But apparently for him to name God, and all that the term implied, and to be assured that Jesus had an eternal existence with God and came from God, the Author of all being, was to accept the eternal sonship

of Christ without being troubled by merely human necessities. Then follows the claim, so often repeated, for Christ, to be the light which has come into the world to enlighten every man. He sums it up in a single great sentence of supreme affirmation, 'And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.' That is John's thesis. It is the index of all that is to follow and the key to the secret of the Lord whom he is to portray.

Before John passes on to adduce the proofs of this transcendent claim, he writes a brief chronicle of the beginning of Christ's ministry. Its purpose is to relate its connection with the ministry of John the Baptist, and the circumstances under which Jesus began His own ministry by calling disciples to Himself. It was the Baptist's eulogium which led him and Andrew, his fellow disciple, to seek the presence of Jesus. He makes a reference, full of significance, to that unforgettable

night he spent sitting at Christ's feet, and he sets down the hour at which it began. He remembers the uplifting joy with which he and his fellow disciple passed out of Christ's presence to tell their friends that the Christ had come. He adds a brief record of the experiences of the other disciples consummating in the witness of Nathanael, because it expresses his own dominating conception. 'Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the king of Israel.'

III

In John's portraiture there are five successive and increasingly intimate manifestations of Jesus in His glory. He shows Him first as the Son of God in His Divine compassion (chaps. ii. 1-vi. 71). We are taken to Cana of Galilee and see Jesus as a guest at the marriage. He describes that moment when the supply of the wine has failed. Mary's words, 'They have no wine,' recall the fact that among Eastern peoples such a failure would have filled

the faces of the hosts with shame, and made them the scorn of their neighbours. John shows Jesus moved with compassion, not only for human weakness and pain and disease, but for its mortifications, and he records the making of the water into wine. Then he adds the significance of the act, 'This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory.'

Then he sets down a succession of confirming incidents. We see Jesus sitting at night with Nicodemus, and we read the contrast of the mind of Jesus with the mind of an honest and earnest Pharisee, a master of Israel. The necessity of the new birth, the power of the Holy Spirit, the great law of the Cross with its healing of men's souls illustrated by the lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness, are set in the record. It reaches its climax in that golden sentence, which was this writer's absorbing message regarding the work of Christ, 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that

whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'

The succeeding incidents deepen the impression which John desires to make. We are taken northward to the well of Sychar, and see Jesus revealing Himself to the remorse-haunted woman of Samaria, so that she is snatched as a brand plucked from the burning. We pass into Galilee, and while Jesus stays at Cana the nobleman of Capernaum beseeches His compassion and power on behalf of his dying son. With a word, spoken in the same hour, the fever has left the stricken child, and Jesus again manifests His grace and truth. Then we pass up to Jerusalem to the feast of Tabernacles. Jesus goes down to the pool of Bethesda. He marks the great multitude of impotent folk. But one more helpless than the others, a man without hope and without friends, attracts His attention. With the words, 'Take up thy bed and walk,' the man was made whole. John now casts a shadow on the story as he makes the first record of

those controversies which so troubled the public ministry of Jesus. This miracle of healing had been wrought upon the Sabbath day, and the narrow, sectarian mind broke out in accusation. The defence which Jesus presented, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work,' seemed blasphemous to these accusers. To John it was a clear affirmation that Jesus was, as He claimed to be, the Son of God, the Father.

One more miracle of compassionate power is recorded because of the issues it raised. That was the feeding of the five thousand on the other side of the sea of Tiberias. This miracle aroused the people to an ardent enthusiasm. They were held by the thought that here was the Messiah who had come to be their king. Jesus checked this shallow enthusiasm with a severe rebuke. Behind it there was that debasing materialism, that cry for easily gotten and abundant bread, that willingness to acclaim as leader any one who will deal with the mere conditions of life, which

has been blinding men in every century. Jesus severely condemned this earthliness of mind. 'Labour not for meat that perisheth.' He proclaimed His mission of giving them 'bread from heaven' to satisfy a deeper and more spiritual hunger. 'From that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with him.' Then John reaches the point at which he has aimed in his record. When Jesus faced the twelve disciples with the determining question, 'Will ye also go away?' Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, son of the living God.' That is the Jesus that John would have us see.

IV

In the second manifestation of Jesus, the Son of God, He is presented in His moral and spiritual power (chaps. vii. 1-xii. 36). In the preceding chapters we have seen, to use a memorable saying of Augustine

in his comment on the woman taken in adultery, the *misera* in the presence of the *miseracordia*. Now we see the multitude, with deeper needs than those which had moved His compassion, in the presence of Him whose moral and spiritual power is able to heal their souls. At this stage Jesus is a name upon every man's lips. His teaching holds the people's ears and touches their hearts. He moves freely through the land, now in Galilee, again across its lake, and again in Jerusalem. But He is assailed by priest and by scribe, and He is followed by scorn and mocking denial. The most notable fact is that the one word on which Jesus always falls back, 'My Father,' becomes on the one side the chief offence, and on the other the chief defence. John presents this truth in a single sentence as he begins to record Christ's manifestation of himself. 'My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak

of myself.' But as the story proceeds, even the name of God is less frequently on Christ's lips, and the single word 'Father' condenses and holds Christ's justification of Himself and John's claim for His eternal sonship.

When we stand some paces off to look broadly at the presentation here, we can single out the distinctive spheres in which Christ manifests Himself in His moral and spiritual glory. Despite the recurrence of question and debate, of charge and counter-charge, and the constant references to the attitude of the people, there stand out definitely the four spheres in which Christ manifested Himself. The first is in regard to that thirst for truth and knowledge and joy in God which all generations of men have confessed. It was at the feast, after days of controversy, when Jesus saw the people, sometimes roused to hostility, sometimes cast down at their sense of need, that He broke out in His pathetic cry, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.' To-day,

as millions attest, Jesus, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, is the water of life. To-day there are still rulers and scribes who deny and scorn. To-day the proof that Christ alone can satisfy the thirst of the soul remains with us. 'He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.' Every man who has drunk of Christ knows the meaning of this strong figure, when the spring of a moral and spiritual passion overflows, and the world around him is blessed.

The second sphere in which Jesus is presented as manifesting Himself deals not with men's thirst, but with a deeper and darker need, the healing of their blindness. As Jesus faced these priests and Pharisees and saw how bemused and darkened were their minds, and as He marked that the people were seduced by sophistries and calumnies, and tempted to deeds of wrong, He saw what He once put in a single phrase, the blind leading the blind, and both falling into the pit.

As Jesus looks upon them all with a patient wistfulness, He cries, 'I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.' These words have become so familiar to us that we overlook their audacity, and we underestimate their grace. If we consider with what a start of surprise they were listened to at the beginning, we shall not wonder that they aroused the fiercer antipathy and stirred up the darker passions of priest and scribe. The one reply Christ has to make against their assault is, 'I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.' That initial word of defence passes up step by step to the declaration, 'I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.' Then it reaches the summit-level of Christ's high claim, 'Before Abraham was, I am.' We need not wonder that they took up stones to cast at Him, and these stones are sometimes cast at Him to this day. The audacity of this claim no longer assails

men's minds. It is no longer to be proved that He is the master light of all our seeing. It is a moral commonplace, even from men who have not yet seen His full glory, that as we walk in His light we walk in truth and charity and purity. It is the simplest of all declarations to affirm that when some lawless, disobedient, misguided and perverse man has been enlightened by Christ, he sees not only a vision of holiness, but the moral darkness of his own heart, and he stands forth as one whose eyes the Son of God has opened. That leads us to see the significance of the record of the opening of the eyes of the man blind from his birth. That event in the physical world has its noblest message as a symbol of the moral world. In the telling of its story the broad truth is disclosed in Christ's own words, 'As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.' And the climax is reached when the purpose of the record is disclosed. When Jesus met the man who had been born blind He is represented as putting His question, 'Dost

thou believe on the Son of God ? ' And the answer comes, ' Lord, I believe, ' and he worshipped Him. That is the writer's resting place on the way.

Then John shows us Jesus manifesting Himself in two other, and even more tragic, spheres than those of the thirsting and the blind. One of them is that lostness of the soul which is a lostness to God, and to His fellowship within the fold of His grace. When Jesus spoke His haunting parable of the Good Shepherd He was looking out on men who were wandering in the wilderness, afar from their home and shelter in the presence of God, and becoming the prey of all the wolves of hate and greed and lust that ravage the soul. So Jesus presents Himself as the shepherd of the sheep, the keeper of the door into the fold, and the guardian and guide of the flock. He closes the parable by a reference which must have been dark enough in the hour of its utterance, but lay in clear light before John set it upon his manuscript. That

reference was to the truth that a shepherd must fulfil his function even at the cost of his life. But again, Christ falls back upon His divine relationship when He utters His defence, 'This commandment have I received of my Father.'

Then John presents Him manifesting Himself as He meets the darkest, the most desolating, and the most dreaded of all human experiences—the passing into death. He tells the story of the raising of Lazarus with an abundant detail, but the point at which he aims is clear from the beginning, and it emerges in the confession with which the story comes to its close. 'I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world' is the confession of Martha. The corresponding word on the lips of Jesus seals the truth, 'Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.'

With this record of the raising of Lazarus the public manifestation of Christ's glory comes to a close. The hostility of the priests and Pharisees has become

venomous, with a fear and a hate which will impel to the darkest crime that the world knows. 'They took counsel together to put him to death.' The events which were occasioned by that intention are set down in a brief succession. The supper in Bethany when Mary broke the box of spikenard over His head and Jesus uttered His prophetic word regarding his burial; the entry into Jerusalem, when Jesus was acclaimed as the Messiah by the multitude; the coming of the Greeks to Philip with the request 'Sir, we would see Jesus,' indicate the close of His public service. These all were strange to those who shared them, but to Jesus their significance was clear. 'The hour is come that the Son of man shall be glorified.' Recording Christ's closing counsel, 'While ye have light believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light,' John sets in a single sentence His withdrawal: 'These things spake Jesus, and departed from them.'

V

Here the writer of the Gospel pauses to sum up the situation. He gives a brief résumé of the work and the teaching of Jesus, and sets down his lament that so few have believed upon Him. He adds his word of pathetic regret that they had not seen His glory, and that even those who had been led into faith did not confess Him, for fear of the Pharisees. He closes with a report of Christ's farewell words as He passes to His final witness and His supreme sacrifice on the Cross.

John now turns to the three other manifestations of Christ's glory. There is no need to deal with them in detail. They present that Jesus whom we have seen in His ministry ever disclosing Himself as the Son of God. But now the disclosure is not so much in word as in deed. Because it is in action that Jesus expresses the passion of His heart and the reason of His coming among men, His

personality is seen in a more abiding vision and a deeper understanding.

The first of these three manifestations is that of Jesus, the Son of God, the Father, *in His love to His own* (chaps. xiii.-xvii.). After his manner John sets down the key to his record at the beginning. 'Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.' We see Him washing the disciples' feet, troubled in spirit as He reveals the treachery of Judas, entering into a larger liberty of utterance when Judas goes out into the darkness of the night. We mark His wistful words as He gives the little company the new commandment of love. Every reader is stirred by the message of the certainty of the Father's house with its abundant room for all His children. We hear Him forecasting the coming of the spirit of truth, and we understand the depths of the disclosure He makes in the parable of the vine, as He sets forth a truth on which every disciple's heart has set its seal. He passes on to words of warning as

tender as that of the mother, of whom He speaks, to the child she has borne. Then this hallowed record closes with the words of the prayer of the High Priest of the Church of God, as He consecrates Himself to His completing ministry. Those disciples who had listened to the words of this prayer with awestruck faces and wistful hearts followed Him in silence as He crossed the Brook Kedron to the Garden of Gethsemane. It is almost impossible even to listen to any suggestion that any other than a disciple, and among disciples any other than that one whom Jesus loved, could have written, much less conceived and imagined, this disclosure of the Son of God, the Father.

The second of these three manifestations is that of Jesus *in the endurance of His Cross* (chaps. xviii.-xix.). We see Jesus betrayed, arrested, bound and led to Caiaphas. We see Him deserted and denied, standing before Caiaphas and before Pilate, and then delivered to death. We see Him scourged and mocked by the soldiers,

rejected by the people, and led out to be crucified. We mark the casting of the lots for His garments, and the women accompanied by the beloved disciple standing at the foot of the Cross. How clearly the personality of one who is more than man, who is the Son of God, stands out in the fulness of His truth and grace! As we hear His last simple quiet words, 'It is finished,' we say, 'Never man died like this man.'

It is more than remarkable that in all this record there is no word of lament, no exclamation of pity, no sentence of denunciation. A sense of an inexpressible wrong blends with the controlling emotion of a speechless reverence and pervades the whole record. But of course this writer is setting down his recital in years after the day of the Cross and the night of the tomb. He sees them not merely as events of tragic sorrow. They stand out in clear light now as the supreme and crowning deed of Christ's earthly life, which will ever evoke the song of the redeemed.

Then, without a single intervening word, John passes from the anguish of the Cross and the silence of the tomb to the fifth and final manifestation of Jesus the Son of God *as the living Lord* (chaps. xx.-xxi.). We are shown Mary Magdalene looking into the empty tomb. We mark her running with breathless haste to bring the disciples word. We see Peter and John looking in with surprise to find only the grave-clothes with which the body had been bound. Then John brings us to behold Jesus. He is walking in the garden. His voice has all the old tenderness and appeal, and we hear Him re-affirming the truth which has held this writer from first to last, 'I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God.' Then we are led into the Upper Room; the simplest and clearest disclosure of all is made as we see Thomas looking at the hands and the feet of Jesus, with the cry, 'My Lord, and my God.'

That is the sight that this writer desired all men to see.

We treasure the portrait in the Synoptic Gospels. That Jesus who went about doing good and teaching the people, who lived and died and rose again, is the gracious personality who holds our hearts under His sway. But when we gather with fellow believers we find that a more wondrous personality has become one of our company. We may have passed in from a world of strain and of anxiety. We may have risen from hearing again the denials of those who reject him, and the indifference of those who do not thirst for the water He can give them, or hunger for the bread from heaven. But as we sit together we see Jesus, as this Fourth Gospel declares, who manifested His divine glory, consummating that manifestation in His death and resurrection, and we assent to the declaration that this same writer engrossed in his Epistle, 'This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.'

V

JESUS—THE RISEN LORD

'Therefore know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.'—Acts ii. 36.

THE Gospels, with their variety of incident and allusion, and their evident purpose of dealing with the love and grace of God revealed in and by Jesus, may be classed as biographies. Their chief interest, as we have seen, focusses on the person and work of Jesus. They are intent on showing Him to be the Son of man who manifested Himself as the Christ promised by the Hebrew prophets, and as the Son of God who revealed the Father by His grace and truth. When we open the Book of the Acts of the Apostles we find ourselves as spectators before a wider stage of action and faith and thought. The writer does not give us a series of

biographical sketches, although one purely human personality is his hero. The book is a history—the first and the unapproachable volume of the story of the Christian Church. The writer's accurate knowledge of the Roman world and its personalities, his sedulous exactness of statement, his personal touch with many of the persons he portrays, and above all his historical genius, have been accredited by the most competent scholarship of recent years. Yet Luke, like all upon whom even the shadow of Jesus has fallen, is not so much engrossed by the rise and progress of the Christian Church as he is by the evidence of the ever-widening and ever more wonderful rule and authority and power of Jesus. But the Jesus he portrays is not that of the Gospels. He discloses the fact that the Christian community has passed on to a deeper understanding, and that they are now held by the power of Jesus as the Risen Lord.

I

The Gospels, in their closing references, prepare us for this change. These closing references were written when this more transcendent conception held the minds of the writers. In their pages we mark the change in Christ's humanity. He is no longer described merely as He appeared when He walked in Galilee. His form has changed, and He was not recognised when men saw Him until, by some significant word or deed, their eyes were opened. He was no longer subject to human necessities. It is recorded that on three occasions He ate and drank before His disciples, but no human experience was inevitable. He was above nature's common laws both in His coming and His going. His relationship to His disciples has changed. He no longer dwells with them in a constant fellowship, or maintains the close intimacy of earlier years. They no longer touch Him, although there is the record that He offered His wounds to the

fingers of Philip. He comes into their presence, and He passes from it, under different conditions, and as one who lives in another sphere.

That is the historic record which Luke consummates in his statement on the Resurrection. He makes a brief reference to his own Gospel, affirms in a condensed sentence the fact that Jesus showed Himself alive by many infallible proofs, and then records, in singularly quiet and restrained words, the passing of Jesus finally out of the sight and presence of His disciples. He begins his portraiture by disclosing this complete breach with the past, and this ascension of Jesus when He was taken from them.

This suggestive Christian truth of the Ascension occupies a small place in the modern Christian mind. Believing men hasten to go to Bethlehem. They recall the home at Nazareth. They stand time and time again, hushed, reverent, touched to both sorrow and joy, at Calvary. But they have returned from Olivet, and

seldom lift their eyes to its slopes. Only in their hymns do they rise to their thrill of joy in its significance and its message. The faith of believing men has not failed, but it has become dim. Yet the Ascension, as the place Luke gives it shows, is indispensable to our knowledge of, and our faith in, the Risen Lord.

The reasons for this decline of faith and certainty are clear. It is a mystery into whose secret we have no plain path. It rises into a sphere where analogies almost fail. It has been wronged by a crude interpretation of its symbolism. The old cosmogony which placed heaven over our heads, and hell under our feet, and thereby coloured all scriptural references, is no longer to be mentioned. This round earth of ours is known to be only one of the least of the worlds of an infinite universe. There is no such high and exalted plane of sunny distances and wind-blown spaces, with their green fields beyond the flood. These are symbols such as we crave and need. But they have been wronged and

abused, as symbols so often are, by being regarded as realities. Yet, although they have ceased to hold our minds and quicken our imaginations, their purpose is to proclaim a life and a sphere of being other than that which finds its mode of life and action in turn, but is as real a world of hope and of desire. But it is entirely a reality of the spirit. And it must not be forgotten that the realities of the spirit, although unseen, are more abiding than those of the flesh.

The faith, not only in the possibility, but in the certainty, of what we know as the Ascension, rests on reasons which are truly rational. To begin with, it is declared to be the act of one who has been given all power. Even more significant is the fact that it is complementary to the Incarnation. One who came from God goes becomingly back to God, and that going to the Father was one of the repeated assurances that Christ gave to His disciples. It was becoming to one whose fellowship with God was so close that, when He had discarded the body in which He appeared

to men, and by His divine power risen above its necessity, He should return to what is called, in a tender figure, the bosom of the Father. Paul sets this truth of the spiritual environment in his own way when he corrects all coarse and sensuous conceptions of the spiritual realm. 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.' Even here and now there are hours of such spiritual revelation that great souls have not been sure whether they were in the body or out of the body, for all the bonds of time and sense were loosened. Nature itself has a parable which is prophetic of this Ascension to a spiritual world. When the dragon-fly bursts its prison as it lies a worm in the slime at the bottom of the pool, and rises through its muddied waters to spread its bespangled wings in the sunshine of the upper air, it has ascended. But it finds itself unable to descend into the waters

of the pool. It cannot even touch them, for the touch would be death. So Jesus left this sphere where hand grasps hand, and men look upon each other's faces, to enter that larger sphere of life and being, as boundless as God's power, as timeless as His years, as full of light and of love as God is declared to be, and as abounding in peace and joy as men have found the fellowship of Christ.

That is the truth expressed in this record of the ascension of Jesus. In the moment we realise how great must be the difference in the portrait of Him now to be drawn. He is as certainly the Jesus of the Gospels. The references in the Book of the Acts to the years of His humanity are frequent and definite. But to these men who returned from Olivet in a militant and triumphant faith, with a larger knowledge and an all-conquering hope, there was given a more wondrous revelation, which evoked both a mystic devotion and a self-forgetting sacrifice. Luke at once passes on to write of the Risen Lord.

This new portrait is marked by three changes. The first of these is the choice of a new name. The second is the profession of a new creed. The third is the proclamation and proof of a new dominion.

II

The new name is — ‘the Lord.’ Although this new name apparently holds the minds of these early Christian folk, the past and its names are not forgotten. Reference upon reference recalls the Jesus of the Gospels and His ministry of love and sorrow. At the very outset He is described as ‘Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did, by him, in the midst of you.’ Again they declare in the simplest terms that ‘God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with him.’ In their defences of their faith they go back again

and again to the human life of Jesus and recall His words and deeds while in the flesh. But the new name begins to be predominant, and gradually it eclipses both that of Jesus and Christ. The proof of this is seen in the two postscripts to the Gospels—one to the Gospel of Mark, and the other to the Gospel of John. The last twelve verses of Mark's Gospel have been added by another and a later hand, and their evidence is all the stronger for the fact. The writer of them wrote when this new name had become the accustomed appellation, and conveyed to his mind and to those to whom he wrote the cherished conception of Jesus. 'So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.' In the same way, in the closing chapter of the Fourth Gospel, this new name is used. When the disciples saw the figure of Jesus

walking on the shore, the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, 'It is the Lord.' Then we read, 'When Peter heard that it was the Lord, he cast himself into the sea.' The word for the Lord here is sometimes rendered the Master in the Gospels. But the term in the Book of the Acts has a larger and more spiritual content than was engrossed in the simple term for Jesus as the Master and teacher of His disciples. In the Book of the Acts the Lord is the Risen and Ascended Saviour.

For that reason it is found on almost every page. As the disciples walk out to Bethany before the Ascension they ask the question, 'Lord, wilt thou, at this time, restore again the kingdom to Israel?' Peter, proclaiming the Gospel, definitely affirms, 'God hath made this same Jesus whom ye crucified both Lord and Christ.' To Stephen He is the Lord who is standing on the right hand of God. To Paul He is the Lord who speaks to him as He passes on to Damascus, and to whom he appeals, 'Lord, what will thou have me to

do ?' When Barnabas goes to Antioch and preaches the Gospel, the result is that 'Much people was added unto the Lord.' When He exhorted His converts to constancy He besought them 'to cleave unto the Lord.' When Paul and Barnabas are sent out on their first missionary journey it is said of them and of their fellows that 'they ministered unto the Lord.' When Paul rebukes Elymas, the sorcerer, he lays him under the arrest of a divine power, 'The hand of the Lord is upon thee.' After He has preached to those who were round about we are told 'They were astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.' When Paul began to preach the word beyond the narrow confines of the Jewish believers he reported, 'The Gentiles were glad and glorified the word of the Lord.' As he passed on to Iconium he spoke boldly 'in the Lord,' and when he returned on his homeward journey he commended the elders who had been ordained 'to the Lord, on whom they had believed.' Lydia is described as a

worshipper of God, that is of the God of the Hebrews, but after her conversion she pleads, 'If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there.' To the Philippian jailer in his hour of fear and penitence, Paul proclaims, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' In Thessalonica, in Athens, in Corinth, the message is unaltered, and men are exhorted to faith in the one revered and potent name, and they are baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. The story goes on with the name occupying an almost solitary eminence, and in the closing words it is given the place of honour: 'Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ.' The truth lodged in the term is that Jesus is now the object of worship, the Master of all service, the source of all blessing and power, whose divinity makes Him Lord of all.

III

The second change is marked by a new creed. In the Gospels men were called upon to believe in Jesus as the Christ, and as the Son of God. Now they are called upon to believe in 'Jesus, and the resurrection.' The Christian faith is now a faith in a Risen Saviour. What is the significance of this new creed?

On the day that Jesus died and was buried the disciples were overwhelmed not only by sorrow but by despair. All their dreams had been mocked. They had been speaking about their places in the kingdom, looking forward to a time when Jesus would proclaim Himself as king and put down His foes. They had conceived themselves as sitting on twelve thrones of authority. But now, as Jesus lay in the garden of Joseph, a hopeless gloom overshadowed them. Out of that gloom and despair they emerged in a single day. They rose up in an impassioned joy when they were assured that Jesus

had risen from the dead. That was the fact that altered the creed, and sent out these men to proclaim in a sentence that became a chant upon their lips—Jesus and the Resurrection.

The most casual reader of the Acts of the Apostles will be impressed by the insistence on this affirmation. On the day of Pentecost Peter declares, 'Ye men of Israel, him ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death.' To the multitude at the porch of the temple which is called Solomon's, he says, 'Ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead.' He stands before the priests with the same confident declaration, 'Be it known unto all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.' When he came out of the prison he repeated his

cardinal truth, 'The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.' It is the distinctive mark of the preaching of these evangelists that the apostles 'gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord.' And at Athens, those who mocked Paul declared that 'He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods.' The reason added is that he preached unto them 'Jesus and the resurrection.'

It was their inspired insight which led these men to see that the Resurrection is the distinctive and cardinal truth of the creed of Christ. It remains the best attested fact of history. That attestation does not depend on these Christian Scriptures which we are examining, although their witness is of supreme value, and their record sums up the indefeasible proofs. Beyond the clear and definite affirmations there are such evidences as have proved indefeasible. To begin with, the Resurrection is central to the Gospel proclaimed in Christ. Without that truth there is no such Gospel as has proved

itself to be the power of a new life in the soul. Beyond that religious certainty, there are the facts of the faith and joy of the early believers. Nothing else will explain their courage, their fearless endurance of wrong and shame, their noble sacrifice, except their persuasion that the tomb was empty, and that Jesus had spoken to them after He arose and cast aside His grave clothes. Paul fastens upon that aspect when he deals with the proof of the Resurrection. He sets it down as incredible that such men as these should be found 'false witnesses to God.' But perhaps more conclusive to some minds is the simple fact of the observance of the Lord's Day. The early believers were Hebrews. They kept the Jewish Sabbath, and they were still inclined, through many associations, to hold it in reverence. But the day on which Jesus rose claimed a higher allegiance, and the acceptance of Sunday as the day of rest and worship seals this supreme fact upon the page of history.

The final and conclusive proof of this certainty on which these early believers staked their all, even their lives, lies in the Christian Church. The Christian Church is built at the open grave of Christ. The historical fact is that these lowly born, uneducated, hard-handed and bitterly persecuted men put on power, and founded the only Society which is alive and potent after nineteen centuries. Had they made the attempt to found this Church during years of wild, credulous and unreasoning fanaticism, it would have withered before the heat of scorn and persecution. 'Nothing persists but reality.' The persistence of the Christian faith and the Christian Church is the increasingly evident proof that Jesus arose from the dead. Paul divined the secret when he wrote, 'If Christ be not risen, your faith is vain.'

This declaration of the resurrection of Jesus has been assailed as an illusion in every century. Yet it may be ventured that it was never less denied than in our

own day. It is the supreme miracle of the New Testament, and even a generation ago any miraculous happening was, either publicly or privately, dismissed as impossible. Miracles, we were told, did not happen. There was no evidence that could attest a miracle, for a miracle was a violation of a law. But to-day there is more grace and more caution in the denials than past generations have known. Few men are quite confident that what are called miracles, and especially the miracles of the New Testament, have not happened. For one thing, it is recognised that what is called a law is merely a generalisation of observed phenomena, but that, with a wider and deeper knowledge, it may well be that the so-called law must be displaced from its authority. It is now realised that there are laws subtler and more elastic than once was deemed possible. In the realms of science with its marvellous discoveries of the powers latent in some of the simplest elements, and in the possibilities even of the air,

men realise that what a generation ago would have seemed definitely incredible, is now an actual fact of common life. And when we enter the sphere of healing, and still more convincingly the area in which the spiritual can bend the material to its will, we grow humble in affirming what a potent spirit cannot do.

As a consequence, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is now, in some quarters, not so much denied as explained away. An old-time explanation was that it was a tale told by a half-demented ecstatic girl, who mistook the gardener for Jesus, and found her rapturous testimony greedily accepted. Others have suggested that the story was due to the wish to believe, but that the legend, as with all legends, tended to grow into definiteness and the myth took upon itself the features of history. Others have taken the ground that Jesus was, and is, spiritually alive, and that His appeal and intimacy were gradually given an outward and visible form. In these later years those who

have yielded to the manifestations given at spiritualistic assemblies are inclined to include the appearances of Jesus, and the words He spoke, among examples of what they think to be certainties. Those who claim the shelter of the *séance* forget that the resurrection of Christ is the resurrection of the body, and that the empty tomb and the folded linen and the fellowship of the Upper Room, place it in a different class. No one of these theories, and not all taken together, shake the great certainty that Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead. Because of that resurrection He is Lord of all.

The final truth on which the fact of the Resurrection rests leaves all these cavils and their criticism behind. In Christian teaching the personality of Jesus Christ holds not only the possibility but the certainty that death could not end all for Him. His coming to the earth has proved itself to be an event so fateful, and the whole record of His word and work stands so far above that of any other

historic happening, that it would have been a marvel had He died and not risen again. But the foundation truth is that when we accept the declaration that there is a living God, who is the Creator of this world, every other miracle which is necessary and God-like is credible. The most amazing miracle of all is not the evolution of this world of light and order and beauty, and not even of the realm of human knowledge and desire and will. The real miracle is in the creation of what men see with their eyes and touch with their hands, and still more of what they discern and desire and love with the passion of their souls. The truth set down in the language of the first sentence of the Hebrew Scriptures is the foundation truth upon which all that our poor finite minds call miracle must ultimately rest. 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' Theism must postulate a Creator, and must pass on to a Providence. Every fresh beginning is a divine creation, and however men may conjure up, without

a shadow of proof, the power of matter to pass the gulf between matter and spirit, there remains, so far as we can prove, the fact that personality alone can bring forth personality. The New Testament affirmation always is that *God* raised up His Son Jesus. Paul set the whole truth in his convincing apologetic to King Agrippa, 'Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?' If God can raise the living out of nothing, the raising of the dead is surely within the ambit of His power and grace. That God should raise up His Son requires only the attestation of the historic certainties to make it the faith of all men who believe in God as a personality, and still more as a lover of all His creation. The atheist has no standing ground in the question at all. The portrait which Luke presents shows us the face of a living Lord, who rose from the dead.

IV

The third change is marked by a new dominion. The opening chapters of the Book of the Acts make express mention of the sphere of Christ's dominion which held the mind of the first believers. They recognise Jesus to be the Lord. The record details that they were commissioned to be witnesses to the ends of the earth. But it is most honestly recorded that they still believed the Lord to be only the leader and king of the ancient people of Israel. These disciples proclaimed Christ, as Lord, only to those who were Jewish born, or to Hebrew proselytes. It may be questioned if even Stephen was not held in bondage to this limited ideal of the realm of Christ as Lord. The controversy which almost rent the infant Church in twain arose over the interpretation of the scope of the Gospel message, and the area of the Lordship of Christ. The question at issue became keenest as to whether or not the Gentiles should be circumcised

before they could be enrolled as members of the Christian Church. But the broad issue was raised when men, and even such men as Peter, clung to the idea that Jesus Christ who rose from the dead was to be the Lord merely of a new Hebrew community, not the Lord of all mankind. The controlling purpose of Luke in the Book of the Acts is to write the history of the Christian Church so as to show that Jesus is to be Lord of all humanity.

His record, therefore, falls into three sections. The first section is to be found in the eight opening chapters, in which the early believers preached Jesus only within Palestine and only to Jews, cherishing Jerusalem as the centre of their life. The second section, ending with chap. xvi. 9, marks the great departure. The Gospel had already spread to Damascus. It was preached in northern Antioch. It had been proclaimed in Cyprus. Its missionaries travelled as far as Lystra. But it is expressly noted, even after Cornelius, the Roman centurion, has accepted Christ as

Lord, that the believers 'travelled as far as Phenice and Cyprus and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto Jews only.' The Church was almost rent in twain by this controversy. It was delivered from being strangled in its cradle by the inspired insight and prophetic vision of Paul. At length the Church's eyes were opened and they saw Jesus, as Luke draws his portrait, not merely as the Christ who had come to redeem Israel, and not even as the Son of God who came to call men to the Father, but as the Lord of all mankind.

The third section of the Book of the Acts (chaps. xvi. 10-xxviii. 31) is the engrossing and fascinating history of the ever-widening dominion of the Lord. It opens with Paul's vision at Troas when he hears the cry of the man of Macedonia. He crosses over into Europe, and in city after city he preaches Christ as Lord, and Jew and Gentile sit down at one table, and sing one song of praise, to Him whose kingdom shall stretch from shore to shore.

VI

JESUS—THE DIVINE REDEEMER

(1) IN HIS RELATIONSHIP TO GOD

‘God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.’
—2 CORINTHIANS V. 19.

ANY reader who would pass, with a watchful eye, from the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles to the Epistles of the New Testament would be held at a pause by the change in the presentation of the personality of Jesus. The Christian Church has become so accustomed to this change that it is not often observed. By a natural intellectual act, the different portrayals have been blended into a single picture, which every believing man sees in his hour of spiritual vision. But the difference in the portraiture is not due to any change in the outstanding features of the personality.

We are still conscious, as we are so repeatedly assured, that the Lord whose presence pervades the Epistles is the same Jesus who lived and died and rose again from the dead. But the references to the life in the flesh are few. His words are seldom quoted. His parables are never mentioned. The records of His great hours, which so hold our minds in the Gospels, are never rehearsed. There is a wealth of allusion to the experiences of His earthly life, intelligible only to those who know the Gospels. But the specific references recall only the great deeds and the supreme sacrifices of His earthly ministry, and always with a view to their significance. These references show us that the writers of the Epistles are intent on the timelessness of the scope and power of Christ's human witness. The result is this distinctive change in the portraiture. We see the same features, but we see them under a transfiguration.

I

The reason for this change in the portraiture is a change in the environment. The environment is no longer that of the conditions of His earthly life. It does not include the outward circumstances of the first missionaries of the faith. It is the environment of the soul, and its apprehensions. Its scenery is the experience through which faith passes to peace and to power. The focus point is the presence of the risen Lord in the arena of the soul's conquest. The foreground is occupied by the men and women who have accepted the Gospel, and are keeping the faith, and continuing in the course of a loyal obedience to Christ. The background is the eternal world. It would have been more than strange had there not been this change in the portrait, as those who drew it were expressing their new recognition of the grace and power of that Jesus who is now the Lord of the heavenly places.

This broad reason is disclosed in its effect by the message which is the burden of the Epistles as they are addressed to the circumstances of the first believers. These Epistles are neither biographies nor histories. They are not treatises in either systematic or apologetic theology. They are not even pronouncements which affirm or deny with a keen dialectic, although they call upon their readers to make distinctions. They are letters written by Christian preachers and teachers to the scattered Christian communities. They are distinctively personal, and are as impassioned and appealing, sometimes as tender in their pleading, as those of a friend to a friend. Their real function was, and is, to confirm believers in their faith in the Lord, to encourage them in their loyalty to His mastership, to comfort them in their sorrows, and at times to correct some mistaken conceptions, or to rebuke some perilous modes of life. They repeat, as one might repeat a dominant note of music, the name of Jesus, and they recall His

devotion to God and His service to man, both as a high example and a potent dynamic. When they make an appeal to His life or His death or His resurrection, their purpose is to inspire these simple folk to a nobler loyalty to, and a closer fellowship with, an ever-present Lord.

Their representation of Jesus and their message are also conditioned by the fact that the larger number of the Epistles were written by men who had not seen Jesus in the flesh. They were read to little gatherings of Christian folk, of whom, as a rule, not a single worshipper had visited the land of His earthly life. They knew the gospel story, for the allusions imply that knowledge. We cannot doubt but that brief rescripts of His sayings and doings were in circulation. Even if there had been no written records of the earthly life of Jesus, and if we accept the First Epistle to the Thessalonians as the earliest accredited Christian document, the messages of the preachers were certainly based upon the earthly ministry of Jesus. But it is

evident that the Lord whose personality appealed to their consciousness, and the conception they recall as often as His name was mentioned, the Jesus they realised as they knelt before Him in prayer, was not that which held the mind and the heart of Peter and James and John. There was no screen of an earthly face between them and the Lord, the Spirit, whom they worshipped and served.

A third fact is even more significant. We treasure the earthly life of Jesus for its tender humanity. We are eager to see Jesus as those saw Him who companied with Him all the time that He went in and out among them. But to the writers of the Epistles the compelling truth was His revelation of God, and the certainty that Jesus was now the Lord on high. This was the absorbing and uplifting truth—that Jesus had not lived out His years of love and service to be laid in His grave in a lorn Syrian town, from which He arose to walk on earth. The enthralling truth was that Jesus had ascended into the heavens,

to sit with His Father in the heavenly places, that He might fill all things. So engrossed were these early believers by the spirituality of the being of Jesus that their temptation was to deny the reality of His life in the flesh, and to bleach His true humanity and all that it implied of temptation and suffering. For that reason the references in the Epistles, which are most ardently urged, affirm the reality and the costliness of the victory of Jesus as He lived a human life in the flesh. But the all-engaging fact for these writers is that Jesus was exalted on high, and is now living in a plane of being impossible to Him while He was in the flesh. He who had come from God had gone back to God. So strong was the grasp of this conception upon them that they were almost obsessed by the hope and expectation of His immediate return. Their portrait of Jesus as a personality was that of a spirit present in their gatherings, haunting their steps, answering them when they called upon Him, and speaking to each of them in the

secret of his soul, as often as the hush of His presence fell upon them.

A fourth conception wrought upon their minds with such power as to colour their conception of the Lord. That was their persuasion that the supreme purpose of Christ, in His work and witness, was to reconcile God and the world, and to restore its sinful, outcast, and alien men and women to the fellowship of the Father. It may be said, without fear of over-statement, that they were absorbed and uplifted even more by the work of Christ in His saving power than by the wonder of His personality. It was to fulfil that supreme function that Christ became man. His personality is always referred to with awe and adoration. But His power and passion to save men from their sins always evokes an outburst of wonder and love and praise. The result is seen in their rapture as often as they express their gratitude. They break out into anthems which repeat the certainties of the faith. They enrich their appeals with a jubilant expression of

the wonder of redemption. So it comes to pass that while the Synoptic Gospels proclaim Jesus as the Christ, and the Fourth Gospel presents Him as the Son of God, and the Acts of the Apostles engross the record of the risen Lord, in the Epistles we see Jesus as the Divine redeemer of the world.

This truth will stand out clearly if we recall a few representative citations which reflect the broad intention of the evidence. Paul, in the first writing we have from his hand, exhorts the Thessalonians 'to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.' In his most keenly reasoned letter he again stresses the work of the Mediator. 'Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.' In a later writing, which appears to be a circular letter to the churches, the writer soars into the heavenly world, as he recalls 'the exceeding great-

ness of his power, to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.' Evidence of a more confirming because less self-conscious character is found in those Faithful Sayings which were the inspired chants of early Christian worship. The first of them which has been recorded focusses on the salvation wrought out by Christ. 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.' The earliest creed which has been inscribed in the New Testament is simply a brief description of this portrait of the Epistles, and it singles out its leading features. 'Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.' The truth is nowhere set more clearly and succinctly than in the condensed declara-

tion, 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the ministry of reconciliation.'

II

Such a conception of Jesus could not fail to raise many questions and to demand explanatory interpretations. If Jesus is the Lord not only of the souls of men but of the universe, He cannot be preached so simply or interpreted so easily as that Master of the disciples who sat by the well, who washed their feet, and spoke face to face with them at the supper table. The temptation, never more felt than to-day, to speak with eager mind of this Master of the disciples, and not even to look at the Lord of glory, escapes these questions, and does not need these interpretations. But it misses both the truth and the grace in Jesus. Yet these questions of relationship will not be dismissed. They have burdened the Christian mind and troubled the

Christian heart in every century. They have presented themselves with an intellectual and a moral variation as each age has been influenced by its philosophic prepossessions and its scientific conclusions. The ablest scholarship has taken part in historic controversies. One great teacher has offered critical objections to the conclusions of another. Yet his own statement of doctrine has raised as many difficulties as he has attempted to resolve. It may be ventured that a summing up of the evidence even within the Epistles, under the power of the spirit of God, may lead us into as clear and convincing an interpretation of this portrait of Jesus as can be gained by believing men.

When we consider the first of these relationships—that of Jesus the divine Redeemer to God, the Father, we are confronted with most difficult questions which abide with us. It is clear that the men of the Epistles were not content to say that Jesus was the Christ of God, or even that He was the Son of the Father. They

claimed for him a relationship so intimate and so tender as is to be expressed only as a unity with God in His essential being. They affirm again and again, sometimes in a distinctive declaration, sometimes in a passing phrase, that on the one hand God was in Christ, and on the other that Jesus sits upon the throne with the Father, or more simply still that He is equal with, and in vital connection with, God who is Lord of all. They had not coined the word 'incarnation,' but the truth it holds they constantly maintained. They had not coined any word, nor has that yet been done, to affirm Christ's essential being as divine. Yet it is this second aspect of Jesus who is incarnate Deity, and is also one with God in the sphere of eternal being, that we behold as we ponder the affirmations of the Epistles.

Now it need be no marvel that this relationship cannot be defined in adequate terms. It would be a marvel if it did not transcend our little human powers of understanding, and was not one of those

things in heaven and earth which does not come within the range of our philosophy. There are problems of our common life which we cannot solve. There are experiences which we cannot explain. There are forces whose action and interaction we cannot gauge. There are instincts with which we continually wage a secret warfare. If these pass our understanding we need not wonder that the power and the presence of the infinite spirit so often transcends the reach and grasp of our finite minds. Only the dogmatist who will narrow it down to his own limited range of understanding reaches an unfaltering doctrine regarding this high plane of being. As little can we submit to have this certainty of a divine relationship to God, which is one in essential being, to be due to mere ecstatic feeling, or to be the daring venture of some impassioned mind. Such assertions fail to do justice to the personalities, and the facts, and the forces of the New Testament history. When all possible allowance is made for the possible

misapprehensions of men living in the midst of great experiences, there remains a substratum of evidence which cannot be explained away. At the heart of that indefeasible fact there is this persuasion that God was in Christ, and that Christ closed His earthly life to be with the Father in the unity of the Spirit. Had that been only phantasy, or a devout imagination, it had passed away long ago, mocked by the absence of a confirming evidence, and by realities which have proved their denial.

III

When we endeavour to interpret this relationship in the teaching of the Epistles there are two truths to be kept in mind. One of these is to recall what is termed in the New Testament a 'mystery.' That word does not mean to convey the assertion of an event, or an experience, or a truth or a doctrine too high or too subtle for any human understanding, and, therefore, incomprehensible. A mystery is a truth whose secret may be hidden from

undiscerning eyes, whose reality may be beyond any proud and vulgar demand for material proof, whose certainty is not to be verified by any shrewd and confident philosophical argument. A mystery is a truth whose meaning and power are entered into only by the initiated. It is a truth which was once hidden, and is still dark to the unadventurous, but now revealed to discerning eyes. It is the vision of the pure-hearted, patient-minded, wholly-consecrated men and women, who have not only eyes to see and ears to hear, but minds free from passion and prejudice, and wills wholly surrendered to the will of the spiritual. The threshold of this temple of understanding, as the great Teacher has told us, can be passed only by those who are meek and lowly in heart. The kingdom of God has no others among its citizens. Few of those who make the great denials have worn this garb of the spirit. Of this relationship on the part of Jesus to God we affirm that it is such a 'mystery.' It can be understood not by

the wise and prudent but through the revelation to babes. It is surely beyond all denial that spiritual things must be spiritually discerned.

The second truth is that the words of our human speech in which any interpretation can be set down and its reality vindicated are, and must be, inadequate to its due definition. We realise too seldom how pictorial of the things of earth and time our words are, and how they flutter and fail when we use them to hold and to express the truths of the infinite and the eternal. Our terms for the spiritual are merely symbols, in which we use the seen and the earthly to visualise to our minds the unseen and the heavenly. The simplest instances from the sphere of the spiritual will bring conviction to us all, and make us distrust our power both to express the truth and to understand it, and will keep us back from entrenching ourselves too stubbornly in some cherished historic word. The word Father, as the name of God in relation to those who trust

Him, rises far above any meaning of that term in common speech. But this word employed as the name of God, in relation to Jesus, can be interpreted only by our human experiences. Yet how poverty-stricken are these to express the truth. They are merely gestures made to the infinite and divine reality, whose secret intimacy and loyalty we need not pretend to understand. Again, the term Trinity, drawn from our knowledge of some three or triple powers or potentialities or companionships or colleagueships, recognised to be in a close unity and a tender sympathy, is used to convey a doctrine of the divine too high for our dimly-discerning minds.¹ When we speak, for example, of the 'Formula' of 'Father, Son and Holy Ghost,' the use of such a term as 'formula' should bring us to a pause, and prevent us making some of the confident conclusions which our own term does not want. No Christian man is willing to criticise any reverent attempt to

¹ Not only literature, but common experience, has made us familiar with a dual and a triple personality.

make the inevitable truth of the Trinity real, significant, and potent. But it must remain, to all time, a heavenly truth into whose power and meaning we can enter by experience, but for whose nature and relationships we have only the most approximate terms to use. We can declare with confidence that God, the unseen and eternal, is to us at one time a Father, at another a Son, and at a third a Spirit of light and of power, and that all these are one in being and one as a source of blessing. But beyond that the mystery abides. All we can attain to is to make our confession that we have known 'the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit,' and that these are streams from a single source.

Keeping these truths in mind we may, with some diffidence, attempt to reach a standing ground from which we can interpret this relationship of the divine redeemer to God. That has been most definitely described as 'the mystery of two natures in one person.' These terms lie far

beyond New Testament times, and the New Testament men would have found no help in them. This definition was reached and was almost compelled upon the minds of later believers chiefly by the obstinate way in which, because of the mystery, some, who claimed to be Christians, endeavoured to rob Jesus of His deity. The conclusion was reached in four stages. The first was that Jesus was truly God. The second, denying His real humanity, affirmed that Jesus was God walking among men in mere semblance of human flesh. The third declared that Jesus was God and man in one personality. The fourth emphasised and explained its preceding declaration when it named Jesus as 'the Lord' and as *both God and man*. We might say to-day that the nearest approach, in words, to this conclusion is to affirm that these two natures were in apposition, or in juxtaposition, one to the other, in Christ. With this consequence, that the two wills were always in rhythmic and unbroken action, so that Christ was the sinless one,

and His knowledge of the Father was not given from without, but from within. Yet we must recognise that this resting-place of the fifth century has no great meaning for to-day. It became a contest between two words, neither of which mints the sufficient truth. But it did this great service that it affirmed the truth which the writers of the Epistles urge with an eager confidence, that Jesus, the divine Redeemer, is one in essential being with God.

We may reach some additional clearness of understanding if we remember what is implied in personality, and in the possibilities within a single personality. We must not overlook the fact, which is of almost universal application, that the human and the divine are not alien, as some assume, but are akin. 'What is man?' is the question of the ages. The replies have all been in accord to some extent with that of the Psalmist, 'Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels. Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour.' Our greatest English

poet rose to the same height of conception when he set on Hamlet's lips a succession of suggestive apostrophes. 'What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god.' If we accept the Biblical doctrine of man, and remember that he is a spirit with a consciousness akin, though limited in power, to that of the divine, it is not difficult to conceive that within the soul of Jesus, sinless in conscience and will and desire, the divine Spirit found its fitting temple and perfect sphere. There are unities which transcend all our human analogies. These present themselves, even in simple unlessoned men, in a delicacy and a perfection of inter-relationship which are incredible to others. These New Testament believers spoke of the indwelling Christ, and were conscious that Christ lived and throbbed and willed in them. A modern teacher has led us into some measure of the deep fact of 'the subliminal

consciousness.' But all of these endeavours after the secret of our human nature are guide-marks to show us the way of entering into that relationship of the Divine Redeemer to God, in which it can be said He was one with the Father.

IV

But when all has been said that may be dared in this line of explanation, there is a more revealing light given to us in a great passage in one of these Epistles, in which the greatest mind of the New Testament solved the problem of this relationship for himself. Paul reveals, in his Epistle to the Philippians, in a statement burdened with moral passion and illumined by spiritual insight, his own inmost thought. 'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men ; and being found in fashion as a man,

he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death even the death of the cross ; wherefore God also hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name ; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth and things under the earth.' The Authorised Version does not do justice to Paul's incisive and discerning argument : we should read rather, ' Who, being in the form of God thought it not a prize to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant.' This sublime and unapproached endeavour to express a conception which has always transcended the scope of human speech, because it transcends the power of the human mind to realise, and not only out-paces human analogies, but almost baffles human understanding, remains the highest reach to express, in the language of a figure, the self-humiliation of Jesus. ' He emptied Himself ! ' He poured out of His essential being those powers of knowledge and of action which belonged to the divine.

He relinquished His prerogative of heavenly estate, and of unconditioned authority and unquestioned sovereignty. He veiled His heavenly glory, and was seen only in the likeness of a man. He passed into an earthly sphere of knowledge and of power, accepting not only the conditions of entry into it, but of service within it. He who was rich in all the plenitudes of a spiritual realm, accepted the necessities of the environment of the flesh. Yet that act of self-emptying did not demand that He should unalterably change His divine personality. In the hour when He no longer required to fulfil the functions of the flesh He passed into the unconditioned exercise of His will and power in the sphere of the Spirit.

There is, and there can be, no human analogy to this emptying of himself on the part of Jesus. At the most we can only instance some pale and quite inadequate resemblances to such an experience on the part of those who have followed in His steps. Here is a missionary who has gone

out to dwell with a tribe of heathen men and women. He lives their life, coming into close touch with their dull minds and base habits, as he shares their mean estate. His going necessitated the emptying of himself, not only of his opportunities of joyous fellowship and tender intercourse with those who had shared his life. It meant a lowering of himself in mind, and even taste, to the level of every day's mean environment. Here is that other who spent the whole round of his later years among the lepers of an island in the Pacific Ocean. The cost of it in the impoverishment not only of his mind but of his powers is not easy to compute. To become their servant, to touch their foul and incurable leprosies, to minister to them in ways which meant a continual humiliation, required not only one initial act of sacrifice, but a daily offering up of love and service attained only by prayer and fasting. Here is the mother who devotes herself to a child deformed in body and feeble in mind, requiring the daily fulfilment of tasks that

are repellent to all the senses. How she empties herself of the fellowship and the intercourse in which her spirit has rejoiced, and even robs herself of the power to share in the beauty and the joy which still appeal to her! There are others again who have made a lesser sacrifice when they have left behind them the opportunities which were open doors to positions of eminence and of honour, and have turned their backs on love and on fellowship, and refused the satisfaction of pure desires and noble ambitions, that they might fulfil some high obligation to those dear to them in their need.

These all emptied themselves, and fulfilled their gracious ministry at a cost not easy to estimate. Yet they remained the same in the depths of their essential being. It was possible for them to pass again from the sphere of their narrow and limited and subject lives back into the realm of their former thought and desire. This also is true of them, that in their humiliation they passed to their

exaltation. Through their life of sacrifice they entered a realm of wiser knowledge, deeper understanding, and quickened moral and spiritual passion. So also Jesus who was rich for our sakes became poor. So He was and continued to be as fully divine, though limited by the conditions of His service as He was before His humiliation. He remained still the Son of God. And when He was exalted He sat down upon the throne with God, the Father, equal with Him in power and glory. All that implies is too high for our understanding, but it is not rational to declare it to be incredible.

VII

JESUS—THE DIVINE REDEEMER

(2) IN THE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

‘I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.’—
GALATIANS ii. 20.

‘And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.’—1 JOHN iii. 24.

THE first significance of the portrait of Jesus, the Divine Redeemer, was His essential oneness with God the Father. The second, always blending with the first, was Christ’s work of salvation, with a consequent relationship to those whom He redeemed. The writers of the Epistles fasten their eyes now on the one relationship, and now on the other, and continually include them both in all their most impassioned utterances. The glance passes from Jesus upon the cross to Jesus on the

throne, and again from the uplifted gaze into the heavens to the broad outlook on the earth and its believing men. We have attempted, with a due and inevitable recognition of the mystery—in every sense of the word—of this declaration, to outline an interpretation of this relationship to the Father. Now we pass on to consider the Redeemer, in His reconciliation of God and the world, with the results and the issues which absorbed these New Testament expositors of the Gospel.

I

That reconciliation of God and man began, and was continued, in an experience. It was consummated in a fellowship so close, so tender, so entirely spiritual, and so instantly potent, as to be described as an indwelling of Christ in the soul, so that He held His place in the seat of authority within. Such a declaration may seem to some to be a rhapsody due to a too credulous imagination. It may be regarded by others as an unreasoned and irrational

assertion of undisciplined emotion. To those who name Jesus Christ with reverence, and yet regard Him entirely as belonging to time, it is held to be too high a claim for the spiritual adventure of the soul. Yet there can be no doubt of this—that it was the secure and cherished conviction of the apostolic believers. There can be no question but that it is the repeated and assured doctrine of the New Testament. It is the only possible position to be held by those who accept the truth of a risen and ascended Lord. If there be a living Lord, who is now in union with God the Father both in power and in will, if He is a Spirit who can enter into fellowship with man, His presence with every believer as an indwelling Spirit with reciprocal intimacy, is not an illusion, but a reality continually affirmed by a spiritual experience. If this same divine Redeemer is not holding communion with men to-day, speaking to them as they speak to Him, this faith in the Lord who rose again from the dead will not abide. It does wither

and die in those who deny and explain away the testimony of the apostolic record. They pass into the cold shades of a wistful devotion to a Jesus of Nazareth whose teaching is instinct with truth and always touched to beauty, but who is not one on whom men call, or in whose presence men sit hushed and silent to hold fellowship with him. There is no zeal in their hearts for the coming of His kingdom such as inspires men to go out into all the world. For those who pass out to such service must ever hear the old promise, 'I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.'

The evidence, then, on which this truth rests, both in the New Testament Scripture and in the records of all subsequent Christian history, is that given by the believing soul. It must be always, to begin with, an individual testimony. 'I know whom I have believed' must always be the personal confession. Now that experience has been detailed by one who passed through it with a singular intensity of spiritual struggle. That was due partly

to his own temperament, his past life of passionate, if narrow and sometimes mistaken, religious observance, his rare intellectual endowment, his spiritual genius, and his relentless hostility to the Christian faith and the Christian name. Paul's name is not first on the long roll of that noble succession of men and women who are and remain witnesses to the living Lord. But there is no other whose inmost mind we so fully understand, whose religious biography has been so clearly revealed, both in a friend's historical record and by his own confessions and prayers. Beyond these singular and indeed unique considerations there is the fact that Paul expressed himself only after a self-examination of his experience and a keen psychological analysis of its motives and issues, all set down with a directness, a simplicity, and a brevity to which no other record attains.

Now Paul was a Hebrew. He had passed through a religious experience in his early life which issued in a convinced faith in the God of Israel, and an ardent adher-

ence to the ideals of Hebrew righteousness. To his Hebrew mind the moral order of the world, the creative power and providence of God, and the supreme authority of His law were indefeasible certainties. The conscience of such a man is enlightened, sensitive, authoritative. He had been a student in Jerusalem, recognised by his teachers as a young man of power and of promise. His unquestioned adherence to the religion of his fathers led him, in his early manhood, into the arena of controversy with the outstanding teachers of the Christian faith in Jerusalem. As a rule a man becomes more hedged in to a position by being called upon to set up defences around it. So that, to such a man, the steps by which he passed from a relentless antagonism to a life-long and costly loyalty to Christ were not only definite and memorable, but had been examined and scrutinised, until the exposition of them was the interpretation of their meaning and power. At the same time a man of such spiritual passion, with such a preparation in his past

history, was good soil for the seed of the kingdom.

Now Paul had not seen Jesus in the flesh. His reference to those who had claimed a position of pre-eminence because they had seen Jesus in the flesh, is both a declaration that he had not so seen Jesus, and an assertion that it had no necessity in the Christian life. 'Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.' It is most likely that as a student under Gamaliel, who was teaching in Jerusalem when Jesus was crucified, Paul had known many who had seen Jesus. He had no gospels such as we have, and he does not quote a single Gospel sentence. Yet it is clear that he knew the story of the earthly life of Jesus, and was assured that His crucifixion was the deserved issue of such claims as He was reported to have made. It was these claims, as they were emphasised by the early believers, which aroused him to his unrelenting opposition. In that opposition he was compelled to listen again and

again to the story not only of the life and words of Jesus, but of His resurrection and ascension. There was in the synagogue one man, Stephen, whose grasp of the Old Testament and penetrating understanding of its prophecies must have arrested the mind of Paul. Yet this young zealot heart pulsed with hot anger as he listened to Stephen exalting Jesus above that Moses whom he revered as the source of all authority. In the eloquent apology of Stephen we have a record of the argument which was conducted by the early Christian teachers. When Stephen was condemned, the clothes of the young men who stoned him were laid down at Paul's feet, because he had been the chief accuser and was now the master of the cruel ceremony of his penalty. We hear the echo of Paul's often-repeated remorse in the cry of his older years, 'I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious.'

Such a man is most likely to be hopelessly entrenched in his dogmatic position. But there was one influence which was

silently sapping his own self-confidence. However blinded by his prejudices and warped by his hatred of all that assailed the Hebrew faith, Paul had a more commanding passion. That was his instinctive zeal for righteousness. He did not listen to the story of Christ's life or hear these early believers speaking with tenderness of the moral beauty of Christ's character wholly unmoved. The grace of the words of Jesus as these humble folk repeated them, and the record of His deeds of compassion, together with all the lovely apparel of His life, must have touched Paul at the core of his being. The good seed of the kingdom of God was being sown in his heart almost unconsciously to himself. When he saw Stephen sitting before his accusers with his face shining as it had been the face of an angel, there must have come a deep impression of the transforming power of this faith in Christ. So that we understand that spiritual conflict, that turmoil and torment of the soul, which has been set in that vivid phrase,

‘It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.’

Here, then, we have a man with a full knowledge of the events of Christ’s life, a large acquaintance with the Old Testament prophecies which the disciples quoted, a clear understanding of the claims made for Jesus, and the passion of an unstained and austere devotion to righteousness, all tending to make him reconsider his attitude to Jesus. There was required only some one event to bring him to the threshold of the faith. That event took place on the way to Damascus. The essential feature of it was not the light from heaven whose flash blinded him. It was a voice—the voice that spoke with reproach, ‘Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?’ To his question ‘Who art thou?’ there came the reply, ‘I am Jesus.’ In the moment confusion fell upon his hitherto securely ordered thoughts. He was like a man who had seen a landscape lying in darkness suddenly made clear in a splendid light. All his defences were broken down, and he realised

the truth of the faith he had so keenly denied. After some days of questioning within, and of confession without, he arose and was baptized. 'And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues.' The secret of this by no means sudden conversion was his assurance that Jesus was alive, and that He had spoken to him.

Had Paul attempted to draw a portrait of Jesus at this time, it would have been little more than a sketch. Such a thinker knew that he was facing a great mystery, and that he must relate it to the world and the life, and the faith and the law, under which he had hitherto lived. So he went down to Arabia and to its solitude, and in some remote and lonely village of that desert land he found, as Moses found, the silence in which he could meditate and pray. For three years he continued to read himself in, and to think his thoughts through his experience until there was imprinted on his mind that portrait of Jesus which has become so entrancing to all

Christian men. Then he came forth to preach the Divine Redeemer whom he now knew with as deep an understanding as Peter or John, indeed with a richer and larger knowledge than they had yet attained.

II

That experience, set with a frank and illustrative self-revelation in Paul's Epistles, is the never-ceasing witness of believing men. Few may be able to say with Paul's intense passionate words, 'I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' There may be more who can use John's more placid and more mystic words, 'Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the spirit which he hath given us.' There are others, for whom speech is always difficult, who cannot rise beyond a simple affirmation. Yet in whatever form, or however expressed, every Christian believer must be able to affirm that he has heard the voice of Jesus. Millions whose names have never been

known beyond the little company of their fellowship, whose children rise up to call them blessed, can reveal, in some moment of unusual confidence, the fact that they also listened to the voice that called them to faith and to peace and righteousness. But there are great saints, men and women of unique personality, and of rare gifts of thought and speech and song, who have set their seal to the truth to which Paul gives witness. They have been members of all the communions of the Christian faith. They have not always used the same forms in worship. They have been too often, and sadly enough, alienated from each other by petty and meanly human controversies. Some of these have been theological, some ecclesiastical, some ritualistic, and some political. But this has been the one common certainty that Jesus, the Divine Redeemer, lived and died and rose again, revealing God to man and working out an eternal reconciliation. The final proof to them was not an authority lodged in some ecclesiastic, not a word in a book, however

treasured, not the assurance of a friend, however endeared. It was the voice of Jesus, which came, sometimes with loud warning and sometimes in a soft whisper, heard within their hearts. We have only to think of the names which stand out in every century, and mark the witness they have presented, to understand this truth. How they enrich the annals and lustre the history of the Christian faith ! Think of such names as those of Polycarp, Chrysostom, Augustine, and Stephen of Marsaba, of Bernard of Clairvaux and Francis of Assisi, of Luther and Calvin and Knox, of John Bunyan and George Fox, of Zinzendorf and Wesley and David Brainerd. We need do no more than recall the men and women who have followed in their steps, until our own day. All of these have made confession that, each in his own way and through his own medium, sometimes by a message of urgent appeal, and sometimes by a mystic word which echoed in a soft whisper within, they heard the voice of Jesus.

Still more cogent is the consenting witness of Christian song. The literature and art of every country express and interpret its moral and spiritual passion. The true reason why there has been such a succession of great poets in Christian lands is the inspiration of the appeal and the message of Jesus. In the same way as the unique spiritual passion of the Hebrews flowered into the still unrivalled glory of the Psalms, so the ardent faith of the Christian believers has found its expression in that unceasing melody of the great hymns that are the treasures of all who worship Jesus as Lord. There are hymns of all ages which Christian men shall never cease to sing. Our own century, in the midst of much that casts a dark shadow on the faith, has not failed to chant the praise, not only of Him who died upon the cross, but of Him whose voice still calls, 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'

III

The distinctive truth about this universal experience is that with all recognition of diversity in knowledge, in temperament, in the path that lies behind, and in the initial endowment of the soul, every instance is to be classed along with that of Paul. Those who pass through it must begin by being sure, as Paul was, about God and the moral order of the world. It is impossible for seed to grow upon a rock, and the Christian faith requires the antecedent of an assurance that God is, and that righteousness is the law of His universe. From that starting point the steps of a Christian experience can be traced. The birth of Jesus with His human life and its grace of word and deed become part of our knowledge.

We pass on to be impressed with the testimony of some witness—some one who plays the part of Stephen to us. We make our next step when some word of prophecy or of appeal, of rebuke or of invitation,

becomes a power in our consciences. Like Paul, we may refuse to yield ourselves, and may be aroused to opposition or tormented by doubt, or we may sink back into an apathy which is the precursor of a scoffing indifference. But the course continues its often silent evolution in those who listen to the call, in much the same sequence as with Paul. A man becomes conscious of his alienation from God, of the self-will of his life, to the dis-peace of his spirit, and, with greater or less intensity, he becomes convicted of some specific sin. It may be, if he is only in his first youth, some failure of an obedience and a service which command the assent of his mind. It may be some fall, unknown to those who love him, which is rankling within his memory and accusing him in his conscience. Then there comes an assurance of God's passion for righteousness, His abhorrence of sin and His certainty of judgment. Here the soul stands at the dividing of the ways. Here some men pass on to a wilful refusal,

until, in the hardening of the heart, they cease to be troubled and find that the day of their concern is closed by a night of darkness. But here also there comes to others the voice of Jesus. He speaks within the soul, and as they hear, they become assured that He lives and loves and redeems. In an hour of acceptance and surrender they pass into the fellowship of believing men.

All down the centuries the same testimony is given. It is not merely the experience of ecstatic enthusiasts or of mystic saints, or of men who have been plucked as brands from the burning, although such as these make the more striking confessions. It is the experience of unlessoned, sober-minded, but sincere men and women, who add to the witness of their confession the testimony of lives of loyal obedience, of unfaltering devotion and of that service and sacrifice which pours out its grace upon their fellow-men.

This witness to the truth that the living Lord speaks to men consummates in the

testimony of the whole Christian Church. To the world, whatever its citizens may think or say, Jesus is the supreme teacher sent from God. We have only to set His name in the list of those who are the masters of the faith and worship of the many millions of the non-Christian world, to realise His pre-eminence. If there is one name which men will not blaspheme, if they have only heard of His grace, it is the name of Jesus. But there are men of the world, whose hopes and fears are bounded by time, whose lives are held in the thrall of things seen and temporal, whose wills are in bondage to the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, to whom He cannot speak, for by them He is not heard. But there is, as these New Testament Epistles prove, even in their ascriptions and benedictions, a certain fellowship, a community, a society, a body, to which Jesus, the Divine Redeemer, holds a specific relationship. Where they gather together He is in the midst. They await His coming as the one source of blessing in

their assemblies. They pray for His Spirit to teach them and to lead them and to inspire them with power to understand His will and to testify to His grace. They are assured that He sits with them at the sacramental feast. But behind it all there lies this confident certainty that the living Lord not only can be called upon in all time of desire, but that His voice can be heard by those who have ears to hear. This society of believing men, this Church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood, is, as decisively and impressively as the inspired word, the witness to the Divine Redeemer, and its unbroken and continued confession that Jesus is the Lord will continue to the end of time.

IV

When we reach this point of view, we can consider the religious values which this ruling truth of Jesus, as the Divine Redeemer, determines. The controlling affirmation is that it is God Himself who has loved us, with a long-suffering and

eternal love, who has opened the door into His fellowship and service by redeeming us through this sacrifice in Christ. The appealing power of this sacrifice lies in the fact that 'therein is manifested the love of God toward us.' That manifestation consummates in the revelation of God as the Father. He is not merely the Father who abides in heaven, longing after and waiting for His prodigal. That Gospel parable sometimes obscures a nobler revelation. He is a Father who has been revealed in Christ, who came to seek and to save the lost and the perishing. He became man that He might accomplish God's reconciliation with His wilful and wayward children. We understand the analogy to be drawn from the father who, in a time of war, bade his son farewell as he went out to the field of battle, which would, in all likelihood, become the place of his grave. And we can realise how such a father was sharing in the sacrifice, and would, had it been within the possibility, have laid himself down on the altar of

death. So in this portrait of Jesus we look into the heart of God, and we understand that power of the moving plea that 'God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while yet sinners, Christ died for us.'

A second religious value is disclosed by the interpretation of the significance of this distinctive act of Jesus in redeeming us to God and to His fellowship. As we have seen, the writers of the Epistles make few references to the historic records in the Gospels, although we are aware that the grace of the Lord Jesus, in word and deed, and the tender compassions of His ministry, were lodged deeply within the apostolic mind. But the idylls of Capernaum and of Bethany, and the records of the mystic communion in the mount, do not hold their thoughts or quicken the pulse of their desire as the remembrance of the humiliation of the manger, the anguish of Gethsemane, and the agony of the Cross. These were the things which these apostolic writers desired to look into. They understood their overwhelming glory. They

realised that nothing in the experience of all mankind could approach their eternal power or match their grace. But the deep significance of them was one of those mysteries which only those knew who had entered into Christ's secret. Sometimes they were baffling even to their understanding. The great gulf that yawned between the sinful and the holy, the impotence of man to make any adequate propitiation for his transgression, his impotence to purge himself from his inward and secret defilement, and his helplessness when he attempted to quell the rebellion of his will against God's righteous law, led these early believers to make their anxious endeavours to understand the method of the supreme sacrifice of Jesus. They knew its power. They saw it delivering and quickening despairing men, and impelling them to enter upon the pilgrimage of the forgiven. They saw that men who were held in the bondage of evil habit, and were in anguish under the accusation of their consciences, were set free from the power

of their past, not by the appeal of a noble precept, or a high ideal, or a shining example. The sacrifice of Christ rose into a sphere beyond these gracious potencies. It had its unique and distinctive power to bring men to a deeper repentance, a more unfaltering yielding of themselves, and, through faith, into the certainty of being reconciled unto God.

The actual bearing of this sacrifice of Christ towards God, and its power in the conscience and upon the will of man, have been in debate through all the centuries. Even within the New Testament there are as many interpretations of its reason and method of reconciliation, as can be found contesting each other's claim for the pre-eminence of truth among ourselves. The analysis of experience seems to declare that, in the personal interpretation and the acceptance of the sacrifice of Christ's death, every believing man sees and acknowledges his own facet of a timeless truth. Each man seeks and finds healing for his own hurt. The confessions of the power of

Christ's sacrifice to reveal the will and to fulfil the purpose of God, and to work within and upon the conscience and the will of man, so as to fulfil the purpose of redemption, are as manifold as human nature and human life are known to be. There is no single, definite, unequivocal doctrine of this reconciliation in the New Testament. There is the repeated and all-including declaration that God was in Christ, and that he became man that he might die as a man, and as one of the race, for the sins of the whole world, in order that He might bring men, one by one, into a conscious acceptance of the mercy of God. What that means in the experience of a young and greatly innocent youth, what it means in the experience of a man with a memory stained with accusing remembrances, what it means in a man with a conscience so inexorable in its condemnation that he has become cynical of all goodness and truth, and what it means for a man with a heart hardened by years of neglect and of resistance to all tender plead-

ing, are obviously different things. There is this wide range and variety of religious experience, revealed in that engrossing succession of the lives of men and women who have found salvation in Jesus. The attempt to outline one single narrow path from the strait gate has done injustice to many of the simplest believers whose lives have been the witness of the sincerity of their faith and repentance. The broad truth of the teaching of the New Testament is that the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross is the offering which God has made and God accepts, so that He is waiting only for men's acceptance of it that each may receive the forgiveness of God. Therein lies the power of its appeal to the conscience and the will of man. It is seen that 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.'

A third religious value in the interpretation of the Divine Redeemer is that He is the Saviour of the whole world. Jesus has come to be the religious Master not of the East or the West, not of the black or the white, but of all humanity. As we know,

it was only after a keen controversy that the primitive Christian community was able to enter into this truth. Some of the early believers clung to the conception that He was the Messiah of the Jewish hope, who would fulfil Isaiah's prophecy of the suffering Redeemer, but that His redemption was potent only within a circumscribed area. Even when the power of their message had overstepped such a limit, and compelled them to realise its universal dominion, they still held that all who came into the fellowship of Christ must pass in by the temple gate. They could not rise to the thought that there were twelve gates into the city of God. When Paul declared, to his pagan hearers at Athens, that he saw all mankind included within the circle of God's grace, and standing finally at the judgment-seat of Christ, whom He had raised from the dead, the message was incredible. But when believing men had their eyes opened to the truth that the Divine Redeemer was the Redeemer of the whole world, they looked

B.

out to the wider horizon, and were almost beside themselves in the wonder and the marvel of the truth. They saw that there are no frontiers to the dominion of Christ, either in its scope or its power. That is the meaning of Paul's declaration, 'There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all, and in all.' Race and ritual, culture and social condition, were separating men into keenly antagonistic sections, as they do to this day. But in Christ all these divisions pass away, and Jesus rules over all because he is the Divine Redeemer of all. It is as he throbs with this thought that a later writer speaks of the propitiation of Jesus, and declares, 'He is the propitiation for our sins.' Then he adds, as if fearful of any limiting interpretation of the power of Christ's sacrifice, 'and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.' In an Epistle, which is certainly one of the latest in the New Testament, the fact of this universal redemption is set in a passage of

singular fulness and beauty which shows how absolutely it had been accepted, and how uplifting was its truth. 'Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ : Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.'

The power of this religious value will never be believed, however it may be presented, until it has been known in its transforming experience. Only the man who can say 'I have been redeemed,' and passes into the work and the discipline, the sorrow and the joy of life, changed in his outlook toward God and toward man, renewed in the inner core of his being, and constantly impelled to follow in Christ's steps, can set to his seal that this is, for the human soul, the master-truth of the Gospel. Whenever men acclaim Jesus merely as a teacher of the supreme morality, or a leader of men into paths of purity and of peace, or when

they can go no farther than the writer of *Ecce Homo*, that noble classic of the Christian ethical ideal, who stopped short of the cross and the open grave, this supreme truth lies beyond their ken. It is, by a witness which is open before all men's eyes, the secret behind the noblest and the humblest lives which have adorned the records of all history. It is the source and spring of that spiritual passion which impels men to the nobilities of a life like that of Christ, and to a service which, like His, is eager to bring all mankind into the fellowship of God. All these see the portrait of Christ, the Divine Redeemer, and they go forth witnessing to Him in the measure of their holy obedience to the heavenly vision.



VIII

JESUS—THE EVERLASTING PRIEST AND KING

‘Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.’—HEBREWS iv. 14.

‘The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord; and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.’—REVELATION xi. 15.

WHEN we consider the fifth portrait of Jesus we find that we have entered into a new environment. The scenery of the writers of the apostolic Epistles has almost disappeared. The historic personalities of the early decades of the faith are never mentioned. With the exception of a passing reference to Timothy, no one of the old names appears. The outlook is no longer toward the communities of believers, but to a world whose centre is not Jerusalem, or Corinth, or Antioch, but Rome. There is a note of universality on every

page, nowhere more evident than in the ascriptions and doxologies, which remain the anthem music of the whole Christian Church. Yet one name meets us in a never-ceasing mention. That is the name of Jesus. That fact has a twofold significance. From one point of view it proves that the focus of the interest of believing men is still upon the personality of the Saviour. From another it affirms that while He is depicted as the exalted Lord, the name that is dearest is still that of Jesus of Nazareth, who lived and died and rose again. Wherever we open the two scriptures, of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Book of Revelation, we find this explicit mention of the personality and the work of Jesus. The writer to the Hebrews proclaims, 'Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.' The author of the Book of Revelation sets his name in the very forefront, 'Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth.'

I

These two books of the New Testament Scripture must be set in a class by themselves. They differ from all the others in distinctive features. They are certainly much later in date of writing than any of the fully accredited New Testament writings. They refer to a later period of the Church's history than is in view by the writers of the larger and more authentic Epistles. They seldom look back to the events of the earthly life of Jesus. The most diligent student cannot glean allusions enough in their pages to make the slightest sketch of the words and deeds of the Lord. They concur also in disclosing a similar situation in the fortunes of the Church and the faith. Both writers are looking out on a world which has become hostile to the Christian communities, and suspicious of their faith and worship. In the case of the writer of the Epistle he discloses his fear of a serious backsliding on the part of many believers. He sees

them tempted beyond their power to resist by the cost of their confession and the peril of their associations. In the case of the writer of the Revelation he sees the Church passing into the fiery furnace of a merciless and malevolent persecution. He sees not merely a tide of pitiless antipathy swelling against Christ's helpless folk, but a storm of ruthless extermination breaking upon them as they are cast into loathsome prisons, or compelled to stand in the arena of their martyrdom. As a result, these two writers coincide in their chief purpose. They call for courage in the evil hour, for a patient endurance of wrong, and for a steadfastness in the faith. One of them recites the record of the great believers in days gone by. The other restates the truths of Christ's work and its issues so as to renew their faltering confidence. Both of them break out into prophecy and vision of the assured triumph of that Jesus, whose voice will yet shake not only earth but heaven, who will, in the end, reign over all the kingdoms of this world.

These correspondences between these two writings reach the same consummation because they hold the same conception of Jesus. They draw His portrait in a quite singular agreement. They both 'consider' Him as He is now abiding in the heavenly places. They recall, in occasional references, the story of His life in such a way as to disclose their assumption that that life is familiar to their readers. But they are enraptured by the vision of that Jesus whom they see through the open heavens. Their chief interest lies not in the wonder and pathos of His words and deeds, but in the final truths of His presence with the Father and before the throne. So one writer inscribes as the opening words of his appeal, 'God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat

down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.' The other, throbbing with the same thought, writes: 'Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth.' The portrait they draw is that of Jesus, the Everlasting Priest and King.

II

These two writings raise distinctive problems which need, for our purpose, only a passing reference. The questions of their authorship, of their date, of their geographical background, especially in the case of the Book of Revelation, are among the most perplexing to New Testament scholarship. But whatever decisions on these important points may be canvassed, they do not affect the broad testimony of the writings. Even some aspects of the interpretation of the figures and symbols, and some features of the exegesis of Old Testament allusions, both in the Hebrews and the Revelation, may be passed by. Our purpose is to take these two writings

as we find them, and to read them that we may learn how their writers, and those to whom they wrote, were agreed in regarding Jesus. The expositions of some of the historic principles affirmed, which have been suggested by patient and discerning inquirers, and the interpretation of the strange symbols which are found in both of the books, need not detain us. There is the more liberty to be taken in this passing by of these complex problems, because the most competent scholarship comes to definite conclusions only with hesitation, and some of the most elaborate schemes of their structure have been made upon one day, and upon the next been cast into the oven. It is therefore all the more remarkable that the teaching of these two writings on the personality of Jesus is so clear and so confident. When we consider again that both of these writings have been given the sanction of the Church, and included within its canon—although not without some contest in regard to the Book of Revelation—we can take up their line

of evidence and regard it as a trustworthy exposition of the place and power of Jesus in the Christian consciousness of their time.

When we consider specifically the Epistle to the Hebrews from this point of view, we are compelled to note that it is not an Epistle in the usual sense of the word. It is clearly the writing of a preacher, as personal, and yet as devoid of direct autobiographical references as all great preaching is. It is called by its own writer 'the word of exhortation' (Hebrews xiii. 22). It has the preacher's passion with its power of expression in oratorical and impressive words, and with the preacher's continual recurrence to arresting illustration. It may have been a rescript of a course of lectures, delivered at first to the preacher's own congregation, and written out to be read to others. We may rest in the conclusion that this preacher was not Paul, and that the suggestions that he was Apollos, or Aquila, or perhaps Priscilla, have no evidence to support them. It is

quite likely that he was a man of Hebrew descent. His familiarity with, and devotion to, the Hebrew tradition and ritual indicate a Hebrew training, and have led to the ascription of the writing as the Epistle to the Hebrews. But it is more likely that this eloquent argument was addressed to a congregation of the Western world, familiar with the scriptures of the Old Testament, which were read in the public worship of the early Church. So that the writer makes large use of the Old Testament faith, to reaffirm and expound the doctrine of Christ's personality upon these sorely pressed believers, that he might quicken their loyalty to their Lord and strengthen them to meet their temptations with unfaltering steadfastness.

The features of this portrait drawn in this Epistle can be summed up with brevity. The first to which the writer appeals at the outset is that Jesus is the Son of God. He sets His station above the prophets, by whom God spoke unto the fathers and above the angels around the throne. He

passes on to outline the high prerogatives of Jesus, as the Son, in that He is worshipped by the angels, and that He sits for ever on high at the right hand of God. He sees Jesus in the seat of power, with the sceptre of righteousness in His hand, having the same vision as the seer in the Book of Revelation. But in his interpretation of what he sees, he reaffirms the certainty of the humanity of Jesus. He was made lower than the angels, and became man and suffered and was tempted as a man, that he might fulfil the function of being a priest in the things of God. The specific reason for His becoming man was that He might taste death for every man. That theme and its relationships control the succeeding steps in his exposition, and he closes with the question 'How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?' Every other sacrifice had been imperfect. Every other required continual repetition. This

sacrifice was a sacrifice of God, and it was offered 'once for all.'

In this ruling declaration there is affirmed that somewhat strangely neglected truth of the timelessness of the sacrifice of Jesus. The years of the earthly life of Jesus and the hour of His death are historic. When He took upon Him the nature of man, He was compelled to live and to die under the conditions of time and space. But His sacrifice is in the Spirit, and is timeless because it is eternal. Before the foundations of the world were laid, to use the words of the Hebrew poet, and after they shall be destroyed, the eternal purpose of the heart and the will of God, and the spiritual fact of its sacrifice, shall remain. 'Who through the eternal spirit,' says our preacher. The truth of this sacrifice is that it is the sacrifice of God in Christ, and is as eternal as the mind of God, but, of necessity, it was fulfilled in the sphere of the earthly and the visible. That is the first landing-place of the writer. The preacher bids men see in the sacrifice of

Jesus the removal of every barrier, raised by a sinful past, to the fellowship and service of God.

The second landing-place is reached when he leads his readers to see Jesus as the Master of the new covenant. The message of Jeremiah, which he quotes twice over, is almost as full of the good tidings of grace as a Gospel. It is the message of salvation not by works but by grace. 'After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts : and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord : for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord : for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more' (Jeremiah xxxi. 33-34). The first line in that covenant is the last in the mention. The new covenant always begins with forgiveness. It is the man who is forgiven who makes his covenant

with God. Only the forgiven soul can pass on to the experiences of the forgiven life. He finds that God has written His law in his heart, has become his God and called him into His fellowship, and has given him a new knowledge of His personality and His will, which enlightens the mind and energises the spirit to a glad obedience.

It was this new covenant which had been consummated between God and man by Christ's sacrifice in the eternal spirit. But with that consummation Jesus had finished the work God had given Him to do. Now He had passed from His earthly sphere of service into the presence of God within the veil. 'For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us' (Hebrews ix. 24). That is the transfigured face which this preacher sees. That is the consummating act by which all has been made new. It is the pledge and proof of the new covenant, of the new life, of the new and living way. Jesus is now the

Everlasting Priest within the veil. No human priest will any longer be required. No other sacrifice, and no symbolic repetition of it, need be made. This is the eternal act, valid and vital for all time, which reconciles God and man. What more can this evangelist say? Only this, that with such a Redeemer there must be no turning back, no trembling loyalty, no faltering confession. Only a steadfast confession of faith in Him who ever liveth to make intercession for us, in the same spirit as that of those great believers he sets in his roll-call of the men of faith, can be worthy of the redeemed. And He closes His appeal with a still more powerful motive: 'Wherefore, . . . let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God' (xii. 1-2). He who so considers Jesus will not fail in the evil day.

III

When we come to inquire into the testimony of the companion witness in the Book of Revelation we find ourselves reading a scripture which is strange and difficult and even bewildering, especially to our Western minds. This book has long been the despair of serious grammatical scholarship. It is the happy hunting-ground of so many misguided people, who seek to see in it a complete guide-book to the future history of the world, and a time-table for all the events of the centuries. Many of its figures and the ecstatic description of its prophetic visions baffle the most earnest and the soundest interpreters. Simple-minded people have allowed themselves to be led into baseless conclusions, and have been encouraged to accept superstitious renderings. Its references to the time and manner of the return of Jesus to the earth—that expectation which has dealt so rebukingly with those who have set down a date on the calendar—are now read in the

larger sense of a prophecy, whose conditions are yet to be fulfilled. Its authorship is as little to be certified as that of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and both its unity and the order of its chapters are in debate. We may make the venture of thinking of its writer, or at least the writer of its visions, as a man with a Bunyan-like mind, but with the more daring and less-restrained imagination of an Oriental. But again we must simply accept this writing as it has been preserved and been accredited by the experience of the Christian Church. We must interpret it by its controlling purpose, which was to strengthen the faith in the believers in a time of crisis, when they were called upon to face the alternative of martyrdom or apostasy. It must not be thought of as a carefully planned literary production. It is a record of ecstatic experiences, and of the visions of a seer, together with the inclusion of a number of the most tender and attractive of all Scripture appeals and prophecies. One service it renders with

supreme and convincing power. It presents a clear and consistent doctrine of the personality of Jesus. In no other scripture is there a higher place given to Him. In no other book are there more convinced, or more accurate ascriptions unto 'Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us a kingdom of priests unto God and his Father : to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.'

To begin with, this writer reaffirms the cherished truth of the Christian experience, that Jesus, who has passed into the heavens, still keeps a close fellowship with His people, and still speaks to those who are waiting, whether in silence or in song or on the words of a fellow-believer, to hear His voice. The writer of the seven Epistles to the Churches tells us that he writes what Jesus has bidden him declare. 'These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.' And the closing reference to the most severely

censured of the seven Churches affirms this truth in a sentence as memorable to the Christian mind as any other of those moving appeals of the New Testament which are treasured by Christian men. 'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock : if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.' That is one of the words of the New Testament which cannot be shaken. The human hand of Him who sits upon the throne knocked at men's doors and entered into their homes to speak with them. He still knocks at the inner door of the human heart, and those who open to Him know of those hours of communion, sometimes so overwhelming as not to be sure whether one is in the body or out of the body, but only with this certainty, that Jesus has spoken, and that His voice will never be hushed again.

The second affirmation declares Jesus to be the Messiah promised by the Hebrew prophets in those prophecies which were so narrowly and unworthily interpreted by

the Jewish people. The writer of this book speaks of Jesus in the words of the Hebrew teachers with a gracious and universal application. He is 'the root and offspring of David.' He is 'the Lion of the tribe of Judah.' He is 'the Ruler of the kingdoms of earth.' By these citations the writer is declaring His sovereignty of the world. He makes one specific reference to a prophecy in the second Psalm that the Messiah shall rule the nations with a rod of iron. That aspect he selects because he is looking out on the tormented and smitten Christian folk, and upon the helpless martyrs in the arena suffering the deadly tyranny of godless heathen kings. The meekness and lowliness of Jesus are not unknown or unacknowledged, but they are, for the moment, in the shadow, as the writer is roused to keen moral reprisals against their persecutors. This aspect of the Messiah may be understood by those who have read such a poem as *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*. So this writer saw Jesus as one trampling on the proud in

His wrath, shivering them like a broken vessel, burning them as fuel in the fire of His anger.

The third presentation is effected by the same mingling of mercy and of judgment. In such a writing as this where the sacrifice of Jesus is so clearly affirmed, we are not surprised to find Him called the Lamb. This is the most frequently applied figure in the book. It may be true that some of the frequent allusions have been inserted by a later hand, but the broad trend of the portraiture inevitably called up the figure of the suffering and sacrificial lamb. Yet it seems almost an impossible collocation to speak of 'the Lamb upon the throne.' And it is still stranger to find that the writer emphasises 'the wrath of the Lamb.' Yet this complex of the Lamb's lowliness and simplicity, together with the thought of the Lamb of sacrifice, combined with this attribute of a righteous anger, sets forth the inner thought of the writer's conception. The dominant idea of the Lamb is that of one who overcomes not by force

or by aggression, not by craft or the weapons of war, but by submission and self-surrender and self-sacrifice. The wrath of the Lamb is simply the moral protest against the wrongs of God's people, and the merciless cruelty which the lusts of the world and the flesh and the evil one visit upon them. It was seen in Jesus when He rebuked the Pharisees with His words of quivering protest, and took His scourge of small cords and cleansed the temple of God. We still need to see in the face of Jesus this mingling of tender compassion with its costly sacrifice, and of intense moral anger with its protest and its prophecy of the penalty of God. As Browning has written of the master-poet of the seraphic bliss of heaven and the terrifying torture of hell,

‘Dante, who loved well because he hated,
Hated wickedness that hinders loving.’

The figures of this Book of Revelation lead up to and consummate in that of the king on the throne. No dreamer ever had so splendid a vision as this ecstatic mystic

of the Apocalypse. No poet has given us so richly wrought a description of the ideal of a kingly realm. In a succession of daring and glowing features he presents the moral and spiritual splendour of the everlasting sovereignty of Jesus. All people, and nations, and kindreds, and tongues shall acclaim Him Lord. He shall be the master of all life, in every sphere of service and achievement. Upon His throne He shall sit both to receive the adoration of His saints and to send forth His judgment on the wicked. His city shall be fairer than the world has known, with the beauty of its river of clear water and the loveliness of its fruitful tree of life. His name shall be written on the forehead of the people of the city, and there shall be no temple within its walls, for all within their compass shall be holy ground. Above all, there shall be no more curse, such as has been visited on the cities and peoples of the kings of the earth, and especially upon God's helpless folk. All the experiences that have saddened life and

visited mortals with misery shall be left behind. There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain. Such was the vision of this seer when he was carried away in the spirit to a great and high mountain and saw this holy city, the new Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. Again and again as the vision is enriched, he hears the songs of those who acclaim Jesus as King. The four living creatures, the elders, the angels which no man can number, the ten thousand times ten thousand of the redeemed, repeat their anthems of praise to the Lamb who was slain and is now the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He sees the realisation of that apostolic description of the kingdom as 'righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.' He stands before the prospect of the final answer to the prayer Jesus taught His disciples to pray, 'Thy kingdom come; thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.'

IV

When we look into this countenance described in the Book of Revelation as like the sun shining in its strength, we see it still to be the face of Jesus. It is the face which once was wet with tears, once shadowed by desertion and betrayal, once pale with the touch of death. That face of the earthly Jesus was never to lose those features which men have cherished through all the ages. Yet now we see how much greater a revelation it can give than when disciples looked upon it in the flesh.

‘That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows,
Or decomposes but to recompose,
Become my universe that feels and knows.’

It is a human face now clothed upon with the divine. The religious values it affirms hold their place in the message of the evangelist. The preacher who fails to keep its declaration within his view, who sees only that Jesus who walked by the lake, becomes little more than a slow-paced expositor. But he who sees this King in

the beauty of His holiness is enthralled with a passion for his Lord and for his sovereignty, in every sphere of being, so that his message is inspired by the spirit of God and baptized into power.

Let us select three of the specific assurances which impress themselves upon us as we see this vision of the Lord. The first is its revelation of a life to come, with its everlasting fellowship and service, its perfect peace and its unflecked joy. Again and again this hope of the life everlasting droops and withers in the chilling atmosphere of an unbelieving world, even within Christian hearts. Some, who keep a resolute silence, have become willing to say

‘And if an endless sleep He wills, so best.’

But no one who has been conscious of the redeeming love and power, and the unutterable solace of the fellowship of Jesus, can ever repeat that chill, sad line. ‘If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable.’ To have known the great Companion up to the edge

of the grave, and then to know Him no more for ever—that is anguish. Yet how few can assure themselves of a life to come from the argument from the being of God and His holy will, or from the moral order of the universe, or from the spiritual—even the supernatural—nature of man, or from the present experience and the reach and grasp of a man's noble desire. We realise why some allow themselves to be persuaded that the dead can communicate with those who yearn for even the most meaningless message, rendered in dark signs, through methods that lend themselves to delusion and deceit. How few in number is this company of the pitifully credulous! We accept rather the teaching of Paul's parable of the seed whose hidden life rises up in a new form and puts on its beauty in a realm of light. We apprehend the fine suggestion of the modern parable of the dragon-fly which flashes its golden wings in the sunshine, but can never even touch the dark waters of the pool in which it lived its former life as a worm in the slime. No,

—only One arose, in His own power, from His grave. Only One returned to speak with man—spirit to spirit. Only One passed into the heavenly places. Only One has said, ‘Because I live, ye shall live also.’ We can receive no message but from Him alone. As we close our eyes on things seen and temporal, we can stay our minds and comfort our hearts with the assurances of these two interpreters of the Lord, when they declare that He abides in that world to which we pass. One of them assures us that we are going ‘unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.’ The other, in his more rapturous words, bids us be assured that we pass in ‘through the gates of the holy city,’ where night shall never be known, and where His

servants shall serve Him and shall see His face.

The second specific assurance is the declaration of a standard of values which this conception of Jesus affirms. Too often the cry 'Back to the Gospels' has been interpreted as a call to see Jesus, not as faith has seen Him, but only as those saw Him who marked His life in the flesh. From that knowledge of Jesus they turn to concentrate their service on the world of things seen. To-day there are many who devote their energies to the remedying of the wrongs of the present life. They are intent upon increasing the social well-being of our cities, the cleansing of its streets, and the enlarging of its homes. Their interest lies in what can be done, here and now, to make the earthly life of men freer and richer, more secure and more radiant with human joys. They fasten their thought on the implications of the ethics of Jesus, and allow themselves to be almost absorbed in the politics of the State. Their deepest interest in the teaching of Jesus is

held by its power to remedy the social wrongs of the economic and industrial life. These are wrongs indeed, and no one need dissuade the eager efforts of every wise and earnest reformer. But there is a peril, not always discerned, in this absorption in earthly well-being. It is ever veering to the course of a sheer materialism. It is so insistent on the larger share of the good things of this life, that it has forgotten that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesseth, and it seldom remembers that He who refused to give men loaves and fishes, explained His refusal by the counsel, 'Labour not for the meat which perisheth.' It fails to recognise how degrading it is, to the rich and to the poor, to eat bread which has not been earned, and to claim privileges which have not been deserved. That leads us to see the peril of a materialistic view of life, and a degradation of all moral values.

But beyond that, it is blind to that law, vindicated by history, that every social reform, every advancement of the eco-

conomic and industrial and political order, must be preceded by a moral and spiritual uplifting. Every advance in social well-being has been due to the leading and guiding of the teaching of Jesus, and to a devotion to His ideals. We shall rightly conceive of our human lives and of their necessities only as we see them *sub specie aeternitatis*. That is how these two writers regard the earthly life. They were looking upward and estimating the standard of values cherished by the Everlasting Priest and King. What they saw was a new Jerusalem of holy living, of meek contentment, of heroic endurance, of fellowship with the Lord, not a Rome with bread and games. This earth is not our home. This life is not all. Its poverties, its sorrows, its pain, are the discipline of God. We must live in it as Jesus lived, and be strengthened and comforted by the assurance that heaven holds all for which we sigh. That is a line of teaching at which some may be quick to scoff, but it is the teaching of the New Testament. It is

the burden of the message of these two writers, who were looking up into the face of Jesus, and looking abroad upon life with enlightened eyes.

The third specific assurance given by this conception of Jesus is the final triumph of the Everlasting Priest and King. Both of these writings are radiant with their outlook to the fulfilment of the better hope. The evils which curse the very soil of the earth shall be banished from human life. The wrong done by wicked hands shall be rebuked, and the wrongdoers shall not find a place within the kingdom. One of these writers grows eloquent in his declaration that while generations may die in faith, not having received the promises, these promises shall all be fulfilled. His plea for patience is based on the assertion that men must wait only 'a little while' until they see the judgment of God. The other writer, looking up into the open heaven, sees all the kingdoms of this world—its thrones and powers and gifts and spheres of human energy—becoming the kingdoms

of the Lord. That is a message which goes beyond the writers of the Gospels and the Epistles. They see only the battle and its strain. They do not hear the song of those who triumph. They see only Jerusalem in its anguish, not Babylon in its fall. But these writers see Jesus as the High Priest within the veil interceding for His people that their faith and hope might be steadfast. And they see Him on the throne ruling over all.

Is it too much to say that we see the signs of this coming triumph? This world is not so evil as it was in past generations. There are crimes, once rife among us, which even the most reckless dare not commit. There are wrongs which the almost universal conscience of humanity now condemns. There are hates, once openly cherished, of which men are ashamed. The dark places of the earth are not so full of cruelty. There are compassions and charities, and ideals of truth and peace, with their leagues and societies of strong-hearted men, which are intent on the well-

being of all mankind. Even the revolt of the nations that have long sat in darkness, and their demands for an equality of political status and a recognition of their right of self-determination, are but the fermenting of the leaven of the kingdom of Christ. The clash of colour may break out in deeds of violence, and may be used by ambitious men to further their own designs. But behind it there is a conception of manhood, and an ideal of liberty, which has been taught by Jesus. Buddha and Laotse and even Mahomet—vast and deep as is their hold on unenlightened consciences—are feeling the sapping tide of the teaching of Jesus. Never did a desire for the well-being of all humanity beat in so many hearts as it does to-day. Never did it so quicken the youth of every Christian land to go forth and bring in this universal kingdom of God. We can descry the coming of that time when all the world shall sing the *Te Deum* as its only and perfect creed, because mankind has seen Jesus as the Everlasting Priest and King.

IX

THE CHRIST THAT IS TO BE

‘When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth. . . . He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.’—
JOHN xvi. 13-14.

‘On his head were many crowns.’—REVELATION xix. 12.

EVERY biography is both a record and an interpretation. But record and interpretation are never distinctively outlined and delimited. They are continually blending one into the other. It is not possible to set down the story of the life of any historical personality merely as a recital of his notable doings and sayings. However stubbornly a biographer may resolve to shrive himself from all prepossession and bias, so as to detail the events of a career with a cool impartiality, he cannot avoid stamping his interpretation on every vital word. And in the case of a personality, while it is of the first importance that the

record shall be accurate and well authenticated, the supreme value lies in the appraisal of the significance of every act and choice. These yield us the interpretation of the character. They disclose the quality of his mind, the power of his soul, the ruling impulses of his will.

That truth, as has been affirmed again and again, is a ruling consideration in evaluating the portraits of Jesus. It meets us as we open the New Testament, and it arrests our attention on every page. We see Jesus not only as His disciples saw Him, and not only as those who made protests against His claims reported His sayings and doings, but as both interpreted His ideals and motives. In the Synoptic Gospels record and interpretation go hand in hand. In the Acts and earlier Epistles interpretation is purposeful, deliberate, self-conscious. In the later Books of the New Testament—the Gospel of St. John, the lesser Epistles, the eloquent apology we know as the Epistle to the Hebrews, and in the Apocalypse—record has almost

ceased, and interpretation has become so intense and so enraptured as to pass into prophecy, with the prophet's vision and symbol.

These later writers explain their interpretations and defend their prophecies by affirming that they were enlightened and guided by the Spirit of God. It was when they were baptized with the Spirit, endued with power through the Spirit, when they were in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, that they not only saw the Lord but foresaw the splendour of His reign and the certainty of His final victory. Westcott, in his comment on the promise of the coming of the Spirit of truth, sums up the issue with clearness and simplicity. 'The message of Christ given in His historical, human life was in itself complete at once. The interpretation of that message by the Spirit goes forward to the end of time.'

That is the reason and the secret of the progressive portraiture of Jesus. The message in His historical, human life yields us the five portraits we have con-

sidered. But we do not, and should not, expect to see Jesus only as He is portrayed in the Gospels. To focus attention on the story of His life in the Synoptic Gospels is to refuse to listen to the whole testimony. It is as unwise as to base our knowledge and understanding of Socrates on the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon, and to decline to consider the *Apology* of Plato. But the loss in regard to a merely human personality is slight compared with that suffered in considering that Jesus who rose from the dead, and ever lives, as millions attest, to meet them by the way, who is the omnipotent personality of the past centuries, and is declared to be—‘the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.’ It is to *guide* us into the understanding of and a sympathy with the whole truth that the Spirit of truth has been given. As we are so guided, we enter into an ever fuller interpretation, so that the five portraits are the first in a long succession. And interpretation is ever passing into prophecy—the prophecy of ‘The Christ that

is to be.' It was the vision of such a fulfilment which saw Jesus on the throne, and could declare that 'On his head were many crowns.'

I

This progressiveness of interpretation is a law with a much deeper and more sacred application than is sometimes realised. It is based on the fact that all evolution is a movement of mind, expressed in act and achievement, in growth and development. It can be seen, where some do not look for it, in the experience of Jesus. He also, owing to His perfect humanity, shared in a progressive understanding of and sympathy with the will and the way of God. That is detailed movingly in all the Gospels, and emphasised in every Epistle. 'He increased in wisdom.' He grew in the knowledge of the will of God throughout His whole earthly life. 'He learned obedience by the things which he suffered.' He became more sure in His self-consciousness of His unique relationship to God.

Step by step He passed along the way both of a clearer recognition of His divine Sonship, and of the work His Father had given Him to do.

Now the refusal to accept and to understand the significance of this truth has given an opportunity to unbelieving and critical minds which they have not been slow to seize. One of the most arresting questions of all time, never more insistent than to-day, is—What was the ruling purpose of Jesus, and what did He expect to be the issue of His mission and ministry? That leads back into a deeper and more momentous inquiry—What did Jesus conceive Himself to be? The first five portraits of Jesus should present, if they are fairly and modestly drawn, the answer given by the New Testament record and attested by the Christian experience. But such an answer to the question is denied as an unwarranted conclusion. That denial is sometimes made with a gesture of superior scorn at human credulity, and sometimes with a pathetic regret that it

cannot be accepted. The more patient denial takes up the ground that this view of Christ's expectations is a misreading of the evidence. There are names of men who have brought a keen-eyed scholarship and an antecedent scepticism to the disproof of the faith of Christian men. But a scholarship as thorough and more patient, less prejudiced and more discerning, with a power of understanding beyond that of the mere hard-grained critic, and open to the realities of a spiritual life and a spiritual realm, has made convincing replies. These replies are based on two premises. One is that this law of progressive knowledge and interpretation is a law of all life and thought. The other premise is that it can be shown to be a law of Christ's own experience. The conclusion is reached that the evidence is not only trustworthy, but is authenticated in, and by, the personality of Jesus.

The main contention of those who endeavour to use the evidence in the New Testament, and especially that within the

Synoptic Gospels, is that Jesus did not anticipate the actual course of the events of His life and ministry, and that He was disappointed at the issue it reached. The conclusion drawn is that He did not conceive Himself to be what the Gospel of St. John and the Epistles strive to prove that He was—the Son of God, who died and rose again from the dead. The argument which supports this position may be summed up briefly in the assertion that Jesus began His ministry conceiving Himself to be the Messiah expected by the noblest spirits of the Hebrew race. He identified Himself with the conception which held the mind of John the Baptist, without John's hard and austere rigour of life, and disdaining his method of vengeance and violence. It was a conception of a Messiah who would quicken and purify the faith of the people, and would establish the Hebrew nation in righteousness, and bring in a realm of power and prosperity and peace. The conception, therefore, in His own mind was, that He had come to be

the Prophet and King whose coming was the one uplifting hope and the absorbing interest of the Jews. The issue would be the bringing in of God's Kingdom and the exalting of His chosen people, according to the cherished prophecy, not only to a moral and spiritual, but also to a temporal dominion on the earth, with all the satisfying felicities which such a visible authority can give.

The proofs that such an interpretation misreads the evidence can be set down here only in the briefest outline. Indeed, in so far as these proofs have value, the more simply they are stated the more convincing they will be found to be. Any adducing of isolated sentences, any microscopic examination of words, any criticism of particles, or any weighing in of the crumbs of evidence, is out of place in dealing with so large an issue. Here again, as with all evidence, the verdict is to be reached by the broad trend of the testimony, without much regard to any hesitancy on the part of one witness, or any stammer in the speech of another.

II

To begin with, the story of the Temptation in the wilderness, set down in its only possible place, at the beginning of His ministry, indicates that Jesus faced the conception of being such a Messiah as the worldly-minded Jews expected, and that He cast it behind Him. He refused to use His power to satisfy men's bodily hunger—a refusal He repeated when He declined to feed the multitudes. He refused to make a spectacular display such as would have caught the imagination, and enlisted the zealotry, of the people of the Holy City. He refused, most decidedly of all, to be allured by the glory of any worthy dominion. The temptation to be an earthly Messiah, with a visible equipage and a worldly state, was to Him a suggestion of the devil. That was not the way along which He looked to the doing of the will of God. That was not His expectation of the issue He hoped to reach, or of the rule and realm of God He desired to establish.

Still more expressive of His mind are His counsels to His disciples. The men whom He called into His fellowship, as well as the men whom He did not even seek, are clear witnesses to His conception of Himself and of His mission. A few fishermen and their companions are not of the quality required to inaugurate and to rule in such a kingdom as the Hebrew people craved. Even more decisive is the evidence of the counsels He gave them when He formed His community, and sent them forth as its Apostles. These counsels revealed not only what their attitude to the Jewish mind and what their spiritual temper should be, but the manner of life they would be called upon to live. The obligations to be utterly dependent on what was given them, to have no appeal but the message of repentance and faith, to use, with a new significance, the salutation of peace, do not accord with any ideal such as was cherished in Hebrew minds. They lend no support to the conception of a pathway of triumph such as some

declare that Jesus expected to travel. When we recall the imperative demands by which He thought to strengthen their courage, and to confirm their consecration, we wonder that any one can believe that Jesus, at any time of His ministry, conceived Himself to be a Messianic King, who would lead captive Jewish hearts and minister to their patriotic ambitions. The insistence on self-denial, the call to self-sacrifice, even to the refusal to save their lives, the requirement of turning their back on home and kinsfolk, should they attempt to lure them back to an easier way, are not consonant with a conception of a Messiah who should exalt Himself and His followers. Above all, the call to take up the Cross—already the figure for the most cruel and abject way to death—is the counsel of one who expects only a way of sorrow and of sacrifice, who has conceived of Himself as one who should suffer unto death. This conception of a worldly triumph haunted the minds of His disciples. But the record is emphatic on

the constancy of Christ's rebuke, both of its possibility and of the mind that craved for its fulfilment.

The most cogent witness to Christ's conception of Himself and His ministry is given us in Christ's reading of the prophecies regarding the Messiah in the Hebrew Scripture. It was the misreading of these Scriptures which had biased and inflamed the minds of the Hebrew people, so that their teachers, as Jesus said, were blind leaders of the blind. As His references declare, Jesus gave the supreme place among the Old Testament Scriptures to the Book of Deuteronomy, the Book of Psalms, and the Prophecy of Isaiah. In Deuteronomy He found the one supreme commandment enforced again and again. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God' is the climax of its message and the law of His disciples' life. In the Hebrew Psalms He found His sense of fellowship with, and dependence upon, God expressed in words which He uttered with a more impassioned accent than that of their writers. But in

the prophecy of Isaiah He found the true portrait of the Messiah. But that was the portrait at which the Hebrew people would not look in Jesus. This sublime vision of Hebrew prophecy disclosed a despised and rejected, a suffering and a sacrificed Messiah, on whose face the shadow not only of scorn and outcasting, but of death and shame, were resting in a bewildering darkness.

These lines of evidence lead us on to the supporting facts of the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, to the witness of those secret hours when He withdrew from men's applause and their intention to exalt Him, and to the evidently genuine desire on the part of the people to make Him a popular leader. So that it is open to say that His life and ministry were a protest against, and a condemnation of, the current Hebrew Messianic ideal. It follows that His conception of Himself and of His ministry, from the beginning, was not coloured by any anticipation of an earthly supremacy.

But this is not to say that His conception

of His eternal Sonship and His forecast of the course of events were clear, full, and definite at the beginning of His showing unto Israel. There is evidence of the growing recognition and the progressive interpretation of His own personality and of the will of God. We must not forget that Jesus of Nazareth, with His full-orbed humanity, was not omniscient. These words 'omniscient' and its companion word 'omnipotent,' ought to be used with more understanding of their application. It is too much to say, without some qualification, that even God is omnipotent or even omniscient. So long as we accept the freedom of the human will, we must also accept a sphere into which the divine will and power do not, will not, and cannot intrude. The human will, we are assured, is able to keep the door of the inner world shut and sealed against the divine guest, who stands without, knocking for entrance. We would not be taught to pray 'Thy will be done' if God were willing to deforce the will of man. That will is able to resist the

will of God's Spirit. Bunyan set the truth in his single, simple, homely line, 'God will have glory—in the end.' In the same way omniscience, when the decisions and choices of a free human will are still to be made, must be considered with some limitation. Jesus was not omniscient. He did not see the end of His ministry. He could not always foresee the next step He should take. And, most important in this present regard, He could not descry the issue of His appeal to the Hebrew people. It is apparent that what He expected, and what He desired, was that the Hebrew people would rally to His message and respond to His call. What He strove to do was to so interpret their Scriptures, and so correct their shallow, proud, self-exalting, and blindly temporal conception of the Kingdom of God, as to purge out of their minds all gross and impossible worldly ambitions. He came to be the Messiah. He came to be the King of the Jews. But He was to be a Messiah who would suffer, and a King who would rule only in right-

eousness, and not in any splendour as would meet the fleshly eye.

There is one regard in which Jesus was disappointed. Isaiah's consummating prophecy in the Fifth-third chapter had its first reference to the Hebrew people. The prophet foresaw the Hebrew people in his vision, as the suffering servant of God, through whose service and sacrifice the Kingdom of God would come. So Jesus also saw them, and His consequent conception of Himself was as the first in the rank of those who should suffer. He conceived Himself to be the Prophet and the Priest and the King who would offer a sublime sacrifice in which would be cast away all that the world could give, to bring in the Kingdom of God. His disappointment—the sorrow that broke His heart—was the failure of the Hebrew people to understand the message of God, and to enter upon that high destiny. It is because of that failure that the Hebrew people is the condemned outcast of the nations, so that many of its members of that

noble race are among the most sordid of mankind. They refused the line of their spiritual ascent.

In the same way there is disclosed in the Gospels Christ's progressive recognition of His own personality, and consequently of His relationship to God. That truth is evidenced in a succession of transforming experiences. The realisation of His Sonship is marked in the words He is reported to have used, in His twelfth year, on His first visit to the temple, 'Wist ye not that I must be in my Father's house?' That whisper in His soul was confirmed and sealed in the hour of His baptism when a voice declared, as the Gospel of Mark records, 'Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' It was still more fully revealed in His experience on the mount of Transfiguration, from which He came down to set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem. It is also significant that when He came in sight of the Holy City He wept over it as He foresaw its destiny. The doom which He declared

to be its fate was visited upon it, because it did not know the day of its opportunity. And the only credible interpretation of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem regards it as His final appeal and His last endeavour to arouse the Hebrew nation to this high vocation of suffering, and thereby inaugurating the true Kingdom of God. But even then the final issue was not quite clear to Jesus. He had to pass from the supper table to the garden of Gethsemane where He entered securely into the will of God, and became certain that His death on the Cross was the cup which His Father had given Him to drink.

It is then evident from the New Testament record that Jesus did not cherish any mistaken conception of His personality or of His mission. What is true is that having become flesh, and being found in fashion of a man, He could enter into the realisation of His divine relationship, and could find the path of His obedience, only by a progressive interpretation of the will of God.

III

This law of progressive interpretation operates as rigorously in all human recognition of the personality of Jesus. 'The interpretation of His message by the Spirit goes forward to the end of time.' It is an evident truth that we know Jesus, understand His character and ideals, and enter into His mind with a surer insight than those who saw Him in the flesh. We have a definite witness in the width and range of His world-wide dominion, and in the power even of His name, which surpasses the dreams of Paul. There has been a succession of what may be called The Ages of Jesus. The history of Christendom presents a succession of periods in which there has been an advance in our recognition of His mind, and a fresh assurance of His abiding presence. These periods have always been marked by a more convinced acceptance of His divine nature. They have been signalised by a more discerning vision of the Christ that was, and is, and

is to come. In each of them, to use the symbolic word of the Apocalypse, there has been placed on His head another of His many crowns.

The first of these Ages was that of which Paul was its prophet. The Hebrew leaders of the primitive Christian communities saw Jesus, even after the cross and the empty tomb, only as the Messiah of the Jews. They had recognised that His dominion was spiritual, and that the weapons of His warfare were not carnal. But they were still held in the bondage of their Hebrew prepossessions. 'Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?' was their question. Paul, born and trained in the midst of a wider environment, looking daily into the faces of the mingled population of a Greek city, saw Jesus not as one who would sit on the throne of David, with a nobler rule than David knew, but as the Lord of all humanity. As he opened men's eyes to that conception, much that lay in the shadow, and even more that had not been discerned at all,

was disclosed to them, and they went forth to proclaim His Gospel to Jew and Gentile. The first crown on Christ's head was the crown of thorns, and it shall always keep its place. But Paul set the second crown above it when He proclaimed Jesus to be the Lord of all.

Another advance, to take a long step, was made in that fateful Fourth Century, when a less enlightened and less adoring loyalty was the mark of those who professed the Christian faith. The subtle influence of the seductive Eastern religions, and the blinding and withering atmosphere of the worldliness of the dominant Western nations, had darkened the vision of the teachers of Christendom. Those who still claimed the Christian name, as their successors do to this day, were content to see in Jesus only a human face, lovely in its grace and compassion, but not the face of One who now sat on the throne of God, equal with the Father, as His only begotten Son. Then the more intense and devoted believers were compelled to look with a

new questioning and a deeper discernment, and they set the truth of the personality of Jesus, as they saw it in clearer vision, in the unfaltering words of the creed of the Council of Nicea.¹ We may well pause at some of the rigid declarations of this great symbol. We may wisely ask for a simpler confession. Yet in the terms of this creed there was engrossed not only a denial of a merely human conception of Jesus, but there was presented a more faithful and more assured portrait of the Lord. The Christian Church refused to be robbed of the larger truth of the Fatherhood of God, and it asserted the revelation of that Fatherhood in the personality of Jesus. In that Age the crown set on Christ's head was that of the Eternal Son of God.

We need not do more than mention some of the successive interpretations of Jesus as they lustre the history of the Christian Church and of Christendom. A brief reference only is required. We may recall

¹ This Creed was adopted at the Council of Constantinople in 381, but its leading doctrine was reached at the Council of Nicea in 325.

Augustine as he refused to consent to a divided spiritual dominion, and proclaimed the grace of God in that love and sacrifice of Jesus Christ which overcame the sin of men. And we can rejoice in his teaching that the grace of God could so surely expel every dark mutiny from the human heart as to make love its all-potent law. He set the crown of the Redeemer on the head of Christ. And we may note the name of Anselm as he looked on Jesus and sought to enter into the sacred mystery of His eternal sacrifice. To him there was given an understanding of the divineness of that personality who became man, for the supreme purpose of redeeming humanity from its curse. We may glance merely at the witness of the 'Friends of God,' when the iniquities of the corrupt and corrupting monasteries and the un-Christlike, and even inhuman, ideals of the friars, had not only discredited the religion of Jesus, but had obscured His power to lead plain men into the gracious fellowship of God. Then these simple 'Friends of God' looked away

beyond the priest and the friar, and saw the Lord, who walked with them by the way, made their hearts burn within them as He spoke to them, and satisfied the hunger and thirst of their souls. They crowned Jesus as the Chief Shepherd of the flock of God.

We pass on to note one other more significant advance, when the Reformers found themselves in a Church rotten at the core, with wickedness sitting in its high places. Base cunning was practised in its councils. Huckstering controlled its methods. Gross immorality lurked within its hidden cloisters. The Church had become an instrument of oppression, and the word Gospel, still dear to humble hearts, was alien to its teachers' lips. Direst evil of all, the simple believing man could no longer pass, in his hour of repentance, into the presence of God as a child to a father. He must seek the offices of a penance imposing priest. Jesus had become only one of the religious potencies the priest professed to employ. He was presented as a

babe in His mother's arms, or as a victim whose image was carven on a crucifix, whose flesh had more value than His Spirit, whose place was taken by a Pope—with crowns enough on his head. But there rose up such men as Luther and Zwingli and Calvin with their band of fearless believers, and they met this apostasy with the message of free and full forgiveness through the one and only sacrifice. They placed on the head of Jesus the crown of the High Priest of Salvation.

In the same way it can be shown that every advance in the coming of the Kingdom of God has been inspired by a larger conception of Christ and His work. It has sometimes been reached by a return to a half-forgotten truth, or by the renewal of the faded moral and spiritual colouring of His portrait. But whether we consider such men as Bernard of Clairvaux, or John Wycliffe, or Francis Xavier, or John Knox, or George Fox, or Nicolaus Zinzendorf, or John Wesley, or William Carey, or Robert Raikes—to name the most diverse of men

who have moved their generation—or whether we recall the record of any one of those witnesses who quickened the faith of the past century, we find that their power to re-order men's lives was based upon a fresh personal interpretation of the personality and mind of Christ. By the guidance of the Spirit of God they were led into the truth. The crown these all aspired to put on Christ's head was that of the Saviour of the World.

IV

Now all these renewed interpretations have been induced under three conditions. The first has been a deep sense of human need, or misery, or moral degradation. Some bondage or injustice, some entrenched and pitiless wrong, some degradation of society and its relationships, or some spiritual deadness has stood out in its curse-bearing power. Those in authority had not eyes to see, or ears to hear. The needy were forgotten, and the expecta-

tion of the poor had perished. The second condition was the awakening to righteousness of some man, often a lonely and little regarded spirit, who has seen the evil and has heard the cry of the oppressed. At times he has become only a social or political reformer, demanding some measure of relief, some change in the code of laws, some adoption of a new theory of economics, or some reconstitution of the framework of society. Such earnest-minded men have attained a measure of benevolence, when their methods have not passed on to break out into a fierce revolution in which a partisan compassion is mingled with envy and hate. The best of these men were disciples only of John the Baptist. The long succession of these protesters has passed, and the evils remain. All such attempts at the healing of the sore leaves the corruption in the blood. Only when a third condition has been fulfilled, and men have been called to look once more into the face of Jesus, and to gain a deeper understanding of His mind, and

to enter into His service, has healing been given to the nations.

These are the essential conditions for the renewal of the life and service of our time. By universal confession the dominant sin of the age is a materialism which is not only blinding men's eyes to spiritual realities, and relaxing their wills from all high and costly endeavour, but is enslaving their hearts by a gluttony of the senses for what the world can give. The temptations of the seen and temporal have enormously increased in the last two generations. A hunger for place and power, for ease and pleasure, for security at the cost of manhood, for the safe gratification of the lusts of the flesh, has been dominating the minds of men. It is not that men do not know, and do not see, the penalties with which indulgence in these passions is visited. Every morning newspaper prints a coarser recital of deeds of shame than ever fell from the lips of the most outspoken Hebrew prophet. What ails this age is moral impotence. Its conscience is no

longer keen and sensitive. Its sense of sin has withered. Even the flame of devotion on the part of many who profess the faith is burning low. The conceptions once held with awe, of God as a God of holiness as well as of love, of man as a spiritual being whose moral dignity and abiding peace and supreme joy are found in purity and self-denial, and of human life as the eternal gift, have become dim to multitudes of men.

What is the urgent necessity? It is a fresh interpretation, a new and more vivid portrait of Jesus. That is the repeated confession even of men who do not sit down at His feet. A writer who has shown, in a somewhat trivial sketch of the ideals of Jesus, an amazing lack of insight into His secret, has written what is really a recantation, and almost a confession of faith. 'To one who reads history as the narrative of the human mind groping its heroic way from the imposition of its own senses and the manifold deceits of exterior nature, it must appear inconceivable that

the ethical ideas of Jesus should ever lose their meaning, and that the personality of Jesus should ever cease from haunting the heart of men and pleading with his conscience. In the darkness of that materialism which returns again and again to the earth, there is no voice so likely to call men back to the truth of their existence as that tender, compassionate, but uncompromising Voice which religious intolerance has never silenced and religious excitement has never drowned.'

But whatever evil religious intolerance and excitement have threatened, the truth is rather that this Voice has been drowned by the rush and roar of the flood of the passions which surge within the soul of to-day. And the further truth is that we need more than a personality who will merely haunt our hearts and plead with our consciences. We need to hear the Voice of that personality which has quickened the dead throughout all the ages. We need to hear His call and to follow in His steps. We need to hear Him reminding us that we

are stewards of all our talents and all our possessions and our opportunities. We need to look out on our fellow-men with His eyes, and to hear His summons to self-denial and to self-sacrifice, even to the meek acceptance of a cross. The crown we must place on the head of Jesus to-day is that of the Lord of all life. No man who has seen Jesus as the Lord of the Vineyard, and the Master of Industry, can be either idle or slothful, either dishonest or unjust, either selfish or pitiless. 'Show me thy glory' was the prayer of Moses. The answer was an assurance of an accompanying and guiding Presence, with a promise of rest. The healing of our strife, in every area of our troubled and contending modern life, can come only from the presence of our Lord. Those who seek His presence see His glory. That is no idle word. It is written large on the pages of the history of the centuries since Jesus lived and died and rose again.

THE END

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